University of Alberta

Teachers in Transition: Moving from Elementary Schools to Junior High Schools

by

Larry Richard Wadsworth

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Administration

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1997

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T6J 3G9

Date: July 29, 1997

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Teachers in Transition: Moving from Elementary Schools to Junior High Schools** submitted by **Larry Richard Wadsworth** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy.**

M Haughey
Dr. M. Haughey (Supervisor)

Dr. J. Clandinin

W. G. Maynes
Dr. W. Maynes

K. Ward
Dr. K. Ward

Donald M. Richards
Dr. D. Richards (Chair)

Dr. E. Schieman
(External Examiner)

Date: May 27, 1997

DEDICATION

It would not have been possible for me to complete an advanced university degree without the help and support of those close to me. Help comes in many forms. They are, encouragement to start and complete the program of studies, financial support, and the understanding by loved ones that you can't always do things with them because work needs to be completed.

I therefore dedicate this research to Dr. Eugene Ratsoy who encouraged me to return to the University of Alberta to complete a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

I wish to dedicate this research to my mother and father, Richard and Helen Wadsworth for offering their financial support.

I wish to particularly recognize and dedicate this research to my wife, Monda and our children, Cameron and Christie who understood that there were times when I was not available to do some things with them as a family.

Abstract

The major purpose of this interpretivist study using narrative inquiry was to explore the socialization of experienced teachers to a new school culture as they made a career transition from teaching in elementary schools to teaching in junior high schools. The study focused on how teachers (1) use constructions of their past experiences to make sense of their transition experiences, (2) link the stories of their present experiences to the stories of their past experiences, and (3) accommodate the transition experience to their ongoing understanding of themselves as teachers and their future in teaching.

From a series of audio-taped conversations with the five teacher narrators the following themes were identified:
(1) Seeking Professional Challenges, (2) Facing Changing Relationships, (3) Coping with Isolation from Peers, (4) Questioning their Professional Identity, and (5) Personal-Professional Knowledge. A discussion of the five themes is presented referring to the teachers' stories and relevant literature.

The teacher narrators were at a stage in their careers where they felt the need for change. The administrators and the other teachers in the junior high schools perceived the new teachers as experienced and therefore not requiring extensive collegial support.

The teacher narrators noted that their relationship with students, staff and administrators had changed. Some of the teachers sensed isolation from peers. One teacher sought support from her previous elementary staff and four withdrew from collegial mixing. The teachers felt that their dreams of being subject matter experts were thwarted because of lack of interest among students.

The teachers questioned their sense of self as teachers as they dealt with new curricula, restraints on professional and personal time, their perception of student and parental apathy, and the lack of support from others. The teachers withdrew to their classrooms and their students where they sensed greater personal control over their situations.

Schools jurisdictions which typically offer support services to first year teachers should offer support services to experienced teachers in career transitions. School cultures differ and newcomers need support so that they become familiar with new ways of knowing and doing with as little stress as possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are a number of people to whom I wish to express appreciation for their support and assistance throughout this study:

Dr. M. Haughey, my thesis advisor, for her supportiveness, guidance, counsel, expertise in research and writing, and untiring support in all phases of this thesis,

Edmonton Public Schools, for granting a leave to complete the program of studies for this degree,

the five teachers, June, Susanne, Gail, Robert and Wayne for their professional participation and cooperation,

my wife Monda, and our children Cameron and Christie for giving support, encouragement, and for allowing the time to complete this study,

and my parents, Richard and Helen Wadsworth for their financial support and encouragement.

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Chapter 1
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study was designed and completed to come to a greater understanding of how teachers make sense of a change in their professional lives when they transfer from elementary schools to junior high schools. Experienced teachers who have made this transition were selected as the focus of this study. The impetus for this research came from three factors: (1) with the changing demographics of the school-age population and the teaching profession, the teaching environment is becoming less stable resulting in greater movement of teachers among elementary, junior high and high school assignments, (2) regardless of this situation, teachers are encouraged to experience new situations during their careers, and (3) informal folklore often describes this transition to be unsettling as teachers reorient themselves to their new schools.

Education students in faculties of education who seek to enter the profession are usually required to obtain their university education by choosing to focus on a particular grade grouping and age level. Not only will the students indicate a preference for elementary teaching but many will also further specify Division 1, (Grades K-3) or Division 2, (Grades 4-6). University students in secondary education also tend to choose between a focus on students in the 11 - 15 age group or on students older than 15. Despite these program choices, successful graduates of teacher education programs receive certification permitting them to teach all grade levels.

While some teachers have moved among elementary, junior high and high school assignments, most teachers, especially in urban areas, have tended to focus their careers at one level only. However, at least three factors have called this practice into question. They are: (1) educators are seeking to replace some existing junior high school practices with those of the middle school, (2) there is a recognition that elementary teachers have a professional orientation that is desirable for the implementation of the middle school concept, and (3) there is a recognition that it is easier to help teachers obtain the necessary subject knowledge than to change firmly rooted instructional practices. Huling, Resta, Mandeville and Miller (1996) noted that

> middle level principals often prefer elementary-prepared teachers to high school-prepared teachers because it is easier to build a teacher's depth of content knowledge than it is to change a content-oriented teacher to a learner-centered teacher . . . (p. 60)

This study was concerned with the reorientation or redirection of teachers who made such a transition. The individuals remained in the same career, but they were making a career transition requiring a re-examination of how they defined themselves as teachers in their new school cultures. Sikes, Mason and Woods (1985) discussed the intrinsic critical phases of teachers' careers. These are times when "the individual is confronted by choices and decisions" (p. 58). Career transitions are defined as a

> result in a change of job or profession, or a change on one's orientation to work while continuing in the same job. Associated with any career transition are personal and financial costs that accrue to the organizations, the individuals, and their families. Therefore, it is increasingly important to understand and facilitate career transitions. (Louis, 1980, p. 329)

Etheridge (1989) noted that "even when individuals experience formalized induction into a new culture, their latent culture continues to influence how they embrace new learnings" (p. 31). Teachers' transitionary experiences can provoke challenges as these individuals make adjustments, either in their belief systems or to the practices that are established routines in their new teaching assignments. Formalized induction programs don't necessarily meet the needs of the experienced teacher new on staff because they are unable to address the many varied situations that teachers face in their classrooms. Often practices that are required by teachers coming to a staff are not mere adaptations of existing routines but are new practices for the teachers. Experienced teachers already on the staff may take these practices for granted. Experienced teachers entering new teaching situations may find adapting to the accepted practices of their new school difficult. The questions that are raised for these new teachers may go unanswered. Louis (1980) described the process of adapting to the new work situation as "sense-making."

> Sense-making is an essential coping process in CTs (career transitions). Through sense-making, transitioners revise the cognitive maps that they use to interpret and describe experiences in the new role and setting. Revisions are made in light of newly gained and previously unavailable first-hand knowledge of the situation. Through sense-making, what is new, different, and - particularly - what was unanticipated becomes integrated into the transitioner's cognitive map. (p. 337)

Through reflection, teachers can make sense of their career transition experience and their interpretations become a part of their stories. In

reviewing the process of reflection, Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) noted that "the final element of reflection, teacher narratives, refers to teachers' own interpretations of events that occur within their particular contexts" (p. 37). Goodson (1993) suggested that research related to the professional lives of teachers should

> assure that "the teacher's voice" is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately. In this respect the most helpful way forward is . . . to build upon notions of the "self-monitoring teacher", "the teacher as researcher", the teacher as "extended professional." (p. 13)

This process of reflection and storying was highlighted by Clarke and Peterson (1986) for whom teacher "behavior is substantially influenced and even determined by teachers' thought processes" (p. 252). They further explained that

> teacher thinking . . . can be thought of as a set of moderating contextual factors that could influence substantially the outcomes of teacher effectiveness and curriculum effectiveness . . . (and it is important) to increase our understanding of how and why the process of teaching looks and works as it does." (p. 292)

The transition from one school to another, and from one level within the educational system to another is often viewed as a career move. Huberman (1989) concluded that the proposed line of inquiry in this study is important because

> recent work on 'school improvement' shows that many of the key determinants are career related: how administrators and teachers view implementation of new practices is closely related to how they construe next steps in their careers. . . . Clearly, issues of personnel policy are contingent on an understanding of the contours and dynamics of the professional career cycle of teachers. (p. 343)

Louis (1980) generated five propositions which help to conceptualize the possible impact a career transition may have on individuals and organizations. The propositions appear to have direct relevance for this research. They were:

> P1: During all types of CTs, (career transitions) individuals are faced with a variety of differences between old and new roles, role orientations, and role settings.
>
> P2: The more elements that are different in the new role or situation, and the more they are different from those of previous roles, the more the transitioner potentially has to cope with.

P3: The type of transition undertaken is an indicator of the general nature and magnitude of differences with which the individual will have to cope.

P4: There is a typical coping process by which individuals interpret and respond to differences experienced during transitions of all types.

P5: An understanding of the coping process combined with an analysis of the type of transition undertaken can be used to foresee the needs and facilitate the adaptation of individuals during career transitions. (p. 331)

Therefore, increased knowledge of how teachers construct and reconstruct meaning based on their experiences can impact many aspects of the educational system. This research, focusing on teacher sense of self as revealed in teacher stories, has implications for teacher development, teacher preparation programs, and change in school organizations, especially leadership decisions about staffing and personnel issues. Teachers can determine the degree of success of curriculum or other innovations based on their personal beliefs and values as part of their practical knowledge derived from experience. The teacher's understanding of the context and culture of a school, the interactions among individuals, the curriculum, and the nature of the adolescents that particular school serves may influence the degree of success of the teacher in the new teaching situation. This study should therefore be of interest to curriculum implementors and planners, researchers, human resource managers, and policy makers.

Coming to the Question

As an experienced elementary teacher, I was asked to transfer to a junior high setting. I ultimately chose to return to an elementary teaching position but during my career transitions I was struck with the many differences between elementary and junior high students and their respective school cultures. I had been unprepared for the magnitude of the differences and so I sought to discover what the transition experience was for others.

I thought over my own career and the transition that I had recently experienced as I moved from an elementary school, where I had been for thirteen years, to a junior high school with no previous teaching experience at that level. The dilemmas that I experienced were many and challenged my own beliefs about education and about my abilities as a teacher. The transition was long and traumatic, but eventually new ways of doing things and of

relating to a different type of student started to emerge in my daily practices in the classroom. During this period of many trials and errors, there was a strong feeling of isolation. My sense of self was challenged and this affected many aspects of my professional and personal life. There was little help to be found as I tried to make the necessary adjustments to my belief system so that I could experience success with my students. The experience, though it might be similar to the experiences of others, was personal which increased the difficulty in seeking assistance. I thought there would be merit in exploring the transition experiences of other teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the transition experiences of teachers who had transferred from elementary to junior high schools.

I sought to explore how teachers' sense of self was influenced by a career transition experience and how the transition from an elementary school culture to a junior high school culture influences the knowledge that teachers have of themselves as professionals. This research was based on my belief that teachers' actions are governed by their belief systems, and that their practical knowledge is constructed from their past experiences, professional and personal. This belief emerged as a result of previous research experiences as a graduate student and from eighteen years of teaching experience in elementary and junior high schools.

Research Questions

Specifically, I sought to discuss with teachers their understanding of their elementary experiences, their reasons for transferring to junior high, and their experiences of becoming junior high teachers.

In this interpretivist study, narrative inquiry was used to explore how experienced teachers (1) use constructions of their past experiences to make sense of their transition experiences, (2) link the stories of their present transition experience to the stories of their past experiences, and (3) accommodate the transition experience to their ongoing understanding of themselves as teachers and their future in teaching.

Delimitations

The study was delimited in the following ways:

1. The teachers, participating in the study, were employed by two large urban school districts in the 1994 - 1995 school year.
2. Four teachers from those identified by the two school jurisdictions volunteered to participate in this research. The data derived from the teacher narrator who participated in the pilot project was included. Therefore the data collected for this research with the five teacher narrators was not intended to be representative of all teachers experiencing career transitions.

Limitations

The following limitations may have influenced the findings of this research study:

1. The degree to which the researcher was able to establish rapport and the extent to which he was able to stimulate the teachers to describe and discuss their experiences may also be a source of limitations for this study.
2. The researcher's own understanding of the transition experience may have unduly influenced the findings.
3. The differences among the teachers in their ability to recall events and feelings, and in their ability to bring meaning to the discussion may be a limitation of this study.

Significance of the Study

A considerable amount of research reported in the literature explores the impact of the transition from the theoretical world of the university to the practical world of the classroom for student teachers. Few research studies have explored the impact of the transition from school to school for experienced teachers and the possible impact this transfer may have on their belief systems about the profession and their teaching.

Dean (1992) completed a research project studying the career transition of experienced teachers as they moved to a high school. One of the teachers had been an elementary teacher and the four others had been junior high teachers. The major findings of the study were that the teachers experienced reality shock, idealistic beliefs became eroded over time, and the teachers had

feelings of lost competence. She found that teacher success at one level of teaching does not mean success at another level. The organization and culture of the high school had a strong impact on the experiences of the first year high school teachers.

Bullough and Baughman (1995) completed a study focussing on the experiences of an expert teacher as she make a career move from one junior high school to another. They felt that new teachers are most likely to make a successful transition when

> there is a balance between ability and challenge, otherwise frustration and disappointment may set in. . . . Difficulties at home, or related to her other roles, lessened the energy she had available to grapple with the new challenges, and the balance was lost. (P. 473)

They further noted that the subject of their research had to, because of the environment and culture of the school, resort to "individual heroism." Support coming from other teachers, the school administrators and the parents of the children was not forthcoming. The teacher had to find the strength within herself to solve her own problems.

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) stated that "the experiences, values, and beliefs stored in the memory certainly have influence on how a new piece of information is perceived and interpreted" (p. 37). Experienced teachers have years of practical knowledge which provide both a frame and a constraint for a transition experience.

Teaching is a complex endeavor. The practice of teaching is full of dilemmas that challenge and often confound the ability of teachers to meet the demands of the profession. Schon (1987) described the demands of professionals as meeting

> the traditions of a calling. They share conventions of action that include distinctive media, languages, and tools. They operate within particular kinds of institutional settings - the law court, the school, the hospital, and the business firm, for example. Their practices are structured in terms of particular kinds of units of activity . . . and they are socially and institutionally patterned so as to present repetitive occurrences of particular kinds of situations. (p. 32)

The challenges and differences encountered by experienced teachers as they leave a situation where they have knowledge of routine practices, their students and accepted professional standards for a new location where these things are uncertain can be problematic for the teacher. New professional patterns of acceptable practices need to be accommodated in teachers' belief

systems. They have to make adjustments to their knowledge of routines and adapt that knowledge to routines which are accepted within the new school. The routines could include discipline policies; instructional practices related to curriculum and perceived effectiveness; evaluation procedures; communication systems with staff, students, and parents; obtaining necessary resources; and expectations regarding the extent of assistance to be expected from others within the school for clerical or discipline problems. More fundamentally, the transition process may require adjustments to the values and beliefs of the teachers over a period of time.

There is a socialization process which takes place over a period of time to the new school culture. The teachers learn the acceptable practices of their new schools. Teachers accept new practices or modify their practices so that they will be viewed by others as acceptable for that school's culture. Gehrke and Taylor (1986) noted that as

> individuals move through life, they grow more like others who experience the same kinds of life events, yet also grow to be different in other ways because of the patterns, timing, and uniqueness of certain other experiences; obviously teachers are no exception. (p.1)

Although experienced teachers are familiar with professional standards of practice and conduct, they are required to make adjustments in their ways of knowing and performing when they transfer to a specific school. The adjustments which are necessary and the resulting challenges for a teacher in a new school at a new age grouping level are more likely to exist in what the receiving schools' staff would consider to be "routines" of performance because they are based on the evolved shared values and beliefs of the teachers and the school administration. Through the process of construction and reconstruction of their knowledge gained from experience in new situations, teachers may adapt existing practices, adopt new practices, or cling to existing practices to deal with their personal challenges. Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) stated that

> experts in supervision, staff development, and teacher education have begun to recognize that teaching is a complex, situation specific, and dilemma-ridden endeavor. . . . Today professional knowledge is seen as coming both from sources outside the teacher and from the teachers' own interpretations of everyday experiences. (p. 37)

The teachers may undergo a process of knowledge construction and reconstruction of their experiences as they tell and retell their stories in a

search to understand their new situational realities. Dewey (1938) in elaborating on the importance of experiences as related to habits, noted:

> every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences. For it is a somewhat different person who enters into them. . . . It covers the formation of attitudes, attitudes are emotional and intellectual; it covers our basic sensitivities and ways of meeting and responding to all the conditions which we meet in living. From this point of view, the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after. (p. 35)

The construction and reconstruction of teachers' stories in a narrative inquiry process and the collaborative interpretation of those stories should help researchers and educators understand how teachers' knowledge gained from experience is reshaped by new experiences and is influenced by affective responses to the situation. The possible effects of a career transition on teachers may have implications for how experienced staff are chosen for and how they are supported through such transitions.

Review of Literature

An exploration of the transition experiences of teachers was based on assumptions about the potential differences between elementary and junior high school cultures. Hence, the first section explores the literature on school cultures in general. The second section examines traditional models of elementary and junior high schools and contrasts the latter with the proposed orientation of middle schools.

Defining School Cultures

Organizational culture is a fundamental part of schools. It can influence how individuals feel and think about their teaching experiences. The schools culture might influence teachers' "sense of self" or their personal "teacher efficacy."

Uncovering a particular school culture and being able to identify the various component parts identified as values, beliefs, norms and assumptions, symbols, rewards and punishments, heroes and heroines is a very complex task. Owens and Steinhoff (1989) reported that there are three levels to consider and conceptualize when thinking about organizational culture. They were:

> 1. the most obvious manifestations of organisational culture are visible and audible: artifacts such as tools, buildings, art and technology as well as patterns of human behavior, including speech. . . .
>
> 2. the values of the organisation, usually encoded in written language such as in a "mission statement", a statement of philosophy, or a "credo". . . .
>
> 3. those assumptions that are taken for granted, invisible, and out of consciousness. These concern the relationships of individuals to the environment, the nature of reality, time and space, the nature of human activity, the nature of human nature, and the nature of human relationships. (p. 13)

Owens and Steinhoff (1989) found it to be very difficult to encourage individuals to talk about what they take for granted, the things that are so common place, because they don't think consciously about how the culture might impact their daily functioning within that organization. They noted that:

> Understanding the organisational culture of a school requires one to uncover the assumptions - unspoken, taken for granted, in the preconscious - that give rise to organisational culture. Because cultural assumptions are so commonplace, ubiquitous, so taken for granted by participants that they do not even think of them, the researcher must use methods that probe underneath the conscious public behaviors of organisational participants. (p. 6)

There are a number of definitions of school and organizational cultures. Tierney (1988) stated that organizational culture is determined by:

> what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. It concerns decisions, actions, and communication both on an instrumental and a symbolic level. . . . The culture of an organization is grounded in the shared assumptions of individuals participating in the organization. Often taken for granted by the actors themselves, these assumptions can be identified through stories, special language, norms, institutional ideology, and attitudes that emerge from individual and organizational behavior. (p. 3)

What people do is often taken for granted. We are often not aware of how we are relating to others or how the culture of the organization has become part of our everyday existence. Individuals within organizations do their assigned tasks without giving conscious thought to every social or business interaction. The way that we behave, our patterns of communication, our ability to follow routines are shared by others within the organization and therefore our individual actions mostly go unnoticed. Schien (1992) defined culture as

> a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 12)

Erickson (1987) described culture as consisting of three main dimensions. They were, "a culture as bits of information, culture as conceptual structure and symbols, and culture as meanings generated in political struggle" (p. 11). Erickson further pointed out that many definitions that have been generated leave the "term without distinct content and leaves the phenomenon of culture in the school invisible and tacit - it's somehow in the air and all around us but we can't see it or talk about it easily" (p. 12). Culture is seen as a special type of knowledge that members of the organization possess, but are usually unable to define, which helps individuals find meaning for their place within the organization. There might be assumptions among a group of individuals within the organization that the culture is understood and shared by all of the participants within that culture.

The culture of the organization is not static and can be changed over a period of time as the beliefs and the values of those within the organization change. The perceived culture acts as a guide that puts limits on the behavior of the individuals participating within the organization. Owens and Steinhoff (1989) noted that

> when we go into schools to see what is going on we can infer the norms by noting the behavior of people - the words they speak, the rituals they observe, the artifacts they use and how they use them, the documents they produce. But the assumptions from which these norms arise are much more difficult to detect and describe because they are tacitly understood by the members of the clan, rarely thought about, and almost never discussed. (p. 11)

The culture of the organization can also be an effective means of communicating information to the individuals within the organization. Johnston (1987) indicated that:

> The culture network is the informal communication system that is used to spread information about what is really happening in an institution. To some extent, it is the grapevine, which every successful principal knows he or she must have access to in order to get information spread rapidly throughout the system. (p. 85)

Firestone and Wilson (1984) suggested that there are "a number of aspects of culture that principals can observe and even change as part of their daily work. To assess a school's culture the principal could focus on its

content, symbols, and communication patterns" (p. 7). Sergiovanni (1995) believed that principals have an important role in developing and nurturing a productive school culture. He noted:

> All schools have cultures, but successful schools seem to have strong and functional cultures aligned with a vision of quality schooling. Culture serves as a compass setting to steer people in a common direction; it provides a set of norms defining what people should accomplish and how, and it is a source of meaning and significance for teacher, students, administrators, and others as they work. Strong functional cultures are domesticated in the sense that they emerge deliberately - they are nurtured and built by the school leadership and membership. (p. 95)

Bolman and Deal (1992) in their discussion of applying their model of "Leadership Orientations" found that principals of schools showed a preference for different leadership orientations. The four dimensions they discussed are: the human resources dimension, the structural dimension, the political dimension, and the symbolic dimension. They found that "the ability to use multiple frames is critical to principals' effectiveness as both manager and leader" (p. 328). Principals who wish to alter the culture of their schools need to be aware of the four dimensions and how changes in one dimension may impact on another. The principal also needs to be aware that the culture of a school is not static, but is constantly being shaped and reshaped as events occur. New experienced elementary teachers coming into an established junior high school culture will influence that culture and be influenced by that culture. Karpicke and Murphy (1996) noted that:

> Organizational culture is a composite of the values and beliefs of the people within the organization. The values and beliefs that make up a successful organizational culture generally are shared by all members and the group operates within a common set of assumptions about the way things are done. . . . As new teachers become socialized into a school setting, they adopt the common practices of the school. (p. 26)

Experienced teachers, making the career transition from elementary schools to junior high schools bring with them learned behaviors, values, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching and education that affected how they functioned in the elementary school culture. The junior high school culture may or may not operate within a similar cultural framework. Coming to an understanding of the new culture is essential for the teacher to accept and be accepted into the new school culture. Schien (1992) noted:

> If we understand the dynamics of culture, we will be less likely to be puzzled, irritated, and anxious when we encounter the unfamiliar and seemingly irrational behavior of people in organizations, and we will have a deeper understanding not only of why various groups of people or organizations can be so different but also why it is so hard to change them. (p. 5)

The challenges faced by a teacher experiencing a new culture is part of a learning process. Teachers may need to make adjustments and concessions to their set of beliefs and assumptions to ensure their successful participation in the new school cultures. Schien (1992) pointed out that socialization to their new cultures required that

> new members discover for themselves what the basic assumptions are. . . . We certainly know that one of the major activities of any new member when she enters a new group is to decipher the norms and assumptions that are operating. But this deciphering can only be successful through the rewards and punishments that long-time members mete out to new members as they experiment with different kinds of behavior. In this sense, a teaching process is always going on, even though it maybe quite implicit and unsystematic. (p. 13)

Maynard and Howell (1989, p. 4) referred to acceptance levels of individuals as "comfort zones." It was important for teachers to be able to arrive at some understanding of what will be tolerated within their school cultures and what they are prepared to accept from the new cultures and adopt as part of their "sense of self" as teachers. Many of the factors that help determine that level of comfort for individuals within the organization are evident in that school's culture.

Different School Cultures: Elementary and Junior High

This research deals with experienced teachers making a career transition from elementary schools to junior high schools. It was necessary to have an understanding of the elementary school culture with which the teachers are familiar and the new receiving, unfamiliar junior high school culture. The teachers are not only leaving a physical and a social environment where they have become comfortable but are leaving a school culture in which they know the ways of doing, the ways of interacting with others, professionally and socially, in short they are leaving their "ways of knowing."

When you enter an elementary school or a junior high school you don't need to read the sign by the front door to know which level of school you have entered. The elementary schools usually have walls amply decorated with

work representing the best efforts of students as a result of working on various themes of study or special projects. The junior high school halls are typically lined with plainly painted lockers down each side of the halls with closed classroom doors separating each section. If student work is displayed, it is usually the work of the art class or art club with the projects safely locked in a display cabinet so that other hands can't damage or handle the students' efforts. There are other differences between the elementary school and the junior high school that are not as readily available to the visitor.

The junior high school model was originally conceived to fill a perceived need to make the transition easier for students from the elementary school to the high school experience which originally started at the Grade 7 level. In the late 1800s authorities became aware of serious problems for existing school systems as the population started to increase. Wiles and Bondi (1993) noted that "Secondary schools reported that students seemed too 'immature' for the studies required. Discipline was a common problem and 'dropping out' was often cited" (p. 5).

In the United States, the first junior high schools were introduced around 1910 and were designed to reduce the population burdens on the high schools and to deal with the high drop out rates. The most common model for a junior high was for Grades 7 - 9 (Allen, Splittgerber, & Manning, 1993, p. 23).

The philosophy that governed this movement was that a curriculum should be devised to meet the needs of adolescence. The initial junior highs never met that goal. Crockett (1995) reasoned that

> early adolescent learners are developmentally different from the early childhood learners from whose ranks they are emerging. They are still constructing knowledge, skills and attitudes that will carry them into adolescence and adulthood. Early adolescent learners are no longer children but are not yet adults. At this stage of life, individual child development - whether cognitive, emotional, physical, or social - is incredibly diverse. (p. 43)

Arowosafe and Irvin (1992) discussed the transitionary experiences of students from elementary schools to middle schools. This transition was seen for our young as a stepping stone, a passage from being a small child to become an individual who is almost an adult. We no longer expect these youths to act and behave as small children do, but expect them to act and think more like adults even though many of them have not developed the cognitive, emotional or social skills to be able to function at the higher adult level. They noted:

> Moving from an elementary school to a middle level school provokes a myriad of emotions, behaviors, and concerns for young adolescents. Not only do the students making the transition experience stress . . . , but many parents are anxious and concerned about the welfare of their young children during this stage of development. . . . For many students, this transition signifies one of the few community-sanctioned stepping stones into 'almost' adulthood. (p. 15)

The relationship between student and teacher differs between the elementary school and the middle school. In the elementary school the teacher is seen as more than an individual delivering a prescribed text of subject matter to his or her students. The elementary teacher who is with one group of children in a self-contained classroom for most of the day is expected to know a great deal about each child. The teacher becomes a parental figure to the child. Once the students makes the transition to the junior high level the relationship between students and teachers change. Steinberg (1991) noted that:

> It does not seem that the individuals who choose to become junior high teachers differ all that much from those who choose to teacher younger grades. . . . the organization and anonymity of junior high schools have a negative effect on the teachers who work in them, which in turn affect the way they interact with students. This is consistent with a large body of evidence that students are more engaged in school when their teachers themselves are more engaged in their work. (p. 229)

Much of the research on early adolescent problems with middle school education focused on the physical and emotional demands that are placed on the child as they experience puberty along with differing educational demands as the children made the transition from elementary schools to junior high schools.

> A variety of explanations have been offered for these negative changes. Some experts have suggested that declines such as these result from the psychological upheaval assumed to be associated with early adolescent development. Others have suggested that the coincidence of the timing of the middle school transition with pubertal develop accounts for the decline. (Eccles, Wigfield, Midgley, Reuman, MacIver, & Feldlaufer, 1993, p. 554)

They further found, as a result of more recent research, that problems of adolescent schooling seem more likely to be issues of lacking "student motivation" and "classroom environments" that don't meet the needs of the students. They noted that if students make a

> transition to a facilitative and developmentally appropriate environment, even at this vulnerable age, should have a positive effect on students' perceptions of themselves and their educational

> environment. In contrast, transition into a developmentally inappropriate educational environment should result in the motivation declines that have been identified as occurring with the transition into junior high. (p. 554)

The educational and emotional needs of the student are monitored by a group of teachers either working in collaborative teams in the middle school or by teachers conferring with each other as in the junior high model where the school organization is based on subject departments.

The developmental needs of elementary and junior high students is reflected in the curriculum requirements for the two levels. Wiles and Bondi (1993) outlined the curriculum requirements for schools serving children at various stages of their development. They suggest that early childhood education, Grades 1 - 3, should focus on:

> Social adjustment, an introduction to institutional living, a building of relationships with other children and adults, the encouragement of socially acceptable behaviors.
>
> Initial physical development, the encouragement of gross motor skills and specialized tasks associated with the schooling process. Also, the detection and correction of progress-retarding deficiencies, such as visual and learning problems.
>
> An awareness of self, the establishment and awareness of self-identity as an individual. The development of autonomy, and exploration of roles, the discovery of interests and talents.
>
> Academic readiness, consisting of learning basal knowledge, developing learning skills, establishing symbols literacy, promoting positive attitudes toward schooling.
>
> Sensory development, encouraging expansion of the five senses including aesthetic appreciation and an awareness of environmental beauty. (p. 13)

The curricula and the associated classroom activities are designed to meet developmental goals. The children are usually grouped and assigned to one teacher who is charged with the responsibility of delivering the curricula in most of the subject areas so that close monitoring of student development can be maintained. Some early childhood programs are now maintaining the learning group and their assigned teacher as a unit over a number of years. Put in the simplest of terms, the early childhood school experience is a socialization process to the structural and social requirements of the school under the close scrutiny of a small number of teachers.

The students in the intermediate years, Grades 4 - 8, are described by Wiles and Bondi (1993) as a time when their educational program should focus on:

> Social development and refinement, to facilitate the acceptance of new roles and responsibilities, to teach the interdependence of individuals in society, to explore social values, to teach basic communications and human relation skills.
>
> Promotion of physical and mental health, an intensive program of exercise designed to develop conditioning and coordination. An accompanying component used to promote positive physical and mental health practices. Basic sex education.
>
> Development of self-concept and self-acceptance, to promote feelings of worth in all individuals, to accentuate strengths, to aid in the development of realistic perceptions and expectations of self, to foster increased independence, to assist in values exploration, to explore and expand interests.
>
> Academic adequacy, to ensure literacy, to aid in the organization needed for academic achievement, to teach skills for continued learning, to introduce knowledge areas, to explore career potentials as they relate to interests, to develop independence and autonomy in learning, to foster critical thinking.
>
> Aesthetic stimulation, to develop latent talents in art, music, writing; to promote an understanding of human aesthetic achievement; to develop a capacity for the satisfying use of leisure time. (p. 14)

The teacher of the early adolescent years is seen as a guide and an advisor to help students explore their world as they develop cognitively, emotionally and physically. The traditional junior high school has attempted to facilitate this developmental process with an organization similar to a high school. Subject matter is departmentalized and the students move from teacher to teacher during structured time blocks. This organization has been seen as not very effective and has led to new models of middle school education being developed. (Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson, & Austin, 1997)

Anderman and Maehr (1994) compared the middle school and elementary school environments. They found that the

> typical middle grade school environment is characterized by few opportunities for students to make important decisions, excessive rules and discipline, poor teacher-student relationships, homogeneous grouping by ability, and stricter grading practices than those in the elementary school years. . . . However, early adolescence is characterized as a period of sociocognitive development that is best nurtured by a strong sense of autonomy, independence, self-determination, and social interaction. (p. 294)

The teacher in middle schools faces dilemmas and challenges as they attempt to meet the developmental needs of the students and at the same time comply with the more academic requirements of the curriculum, the school jurisdiction, or the students parents. Swartz, Merten and Bursik (1987) noted that

> the teacher is constrained by the culture of the school. Consequently, she experiences the need to integrate performance standards into the way in which she routinely deals with students. On the other hand, she is confronted by demands for recognition from students that are defined by school/parent values as irrelevant to such performance standards. (p. 353)

The teacher has to deal with the beliefs of the students. Students become very concerned with their peer group and how they are perceived by that group. The students also start to feel that intelligence is fixed. Studying becomes futile. If studying and hard work don't produce the desired rewards, the students will no longer apply themselves. (Eccles, et al. 1993)

Different organizational models have and are being explored. Some schools have adopted a CORE program where the students stay with one teacher for their main curriculum content. This organization allows the teacher greater freedom to integrate the major discipline areas. The students often see other teachers for their optional courses. The Middle School concept, which has emerged since the early 1960s is structured so that a team of teachers is charged with the responsibility of providing the curriculum to certain groups of students. The teachers meet and collaborate on curriculum design to help students understand the integrated aspect of knowledge. The problem is that

> some middle schools operate more like traditional junior high schools (which are often criticized for treating young adolescents as if they were indistinguishable from older adolescents) or like conservative, small K-8 schools (which have often been criticized for treating young adolescents as if they were still children) than like the "exemplary middle school. . . " (MacIver & Epstein, 1993, p. 521)

Other models for school organization at the middle school level such as Cross Grade Grouping, Ability Grouping and Multi-Age Grouping have been explored. Exploration and experimentation (Arrowsafe, 1992; Crockett, 1995; MacIver & Epstein, 1993; Midgley, Feldlaufer & Eccles, 1989) of different models continues in an effort to find a solution to some of the early adolescent schooling problems.

Crockett (1995) described the early adolescent years, ages 9 - 14 as

> a stage of rapid cognitive, emotional, physical, and social growth. . . . Early adolescence is a dynamic and often confusing stage of life. It marks the most rapid change in human growth and development outside infancy. . . . Typically students at this stage of life are making the transition from concrete to formal operations; i.e. they progress from thinking in simple, tangible terms to thinking in more complex, abstract forms. (p. 43)

The current difficulties experienced by young adolescents as they move from elementary schools to junior high schools are similar to the reasons given for the establishment of junior highs in the early 1900s. Hootstein (1994) when reporting on recent studies done on early adolescent students found that junior high schools do not meet the cognitive, physical, and affective needs of students. Hootstein noted that

> nearly 50 percent claimed they were bored in school half or most of the time. . . . increasing numbers of students merely sit in the classrooms and cut themselves off from the flow of information. . . . adolescence is a time when lack of motivation becomes an increasing problem. . . . Students are often preoccupied with thoughts about personal growth and peer relations. One possible explanation for students' apathy at the middle school level is that they perceive little connection between school learning and their lives outside the classroom; they believe that the subject matter lacks relevance. (p. 31)

The problem facing school administrators is that the schools need to be staffed with individuals who are capable of meeting the curricula requirements, are capable of meeting the needs of a diverse student population, are compatible with the culture of the organization and share a vision with the administration of the school. Huling, et al. (1996) noted that, for principals,

> filling teacher vacancies is a mixed blessing. On the positive side, it is an opportunity to bring new energy to the school and to hire a teacher who has a philosophy compatible with the principal's own vision for the school. On the negative side, it is an awesome responsibility; even the most experienced principals have found that some teachers they felt very good about hiring turned out not to fit the school at all. (p. 57)

They further noted that when new teachers are brought into a new school culture, they

> will bring differing predispositions about working with adolescents that will influence their experiences with their students. Those who consider adolescents to be fascinating creatures to teach and from whom to learn, and those who consider adolescents to be the enemy, will likely find evidence to support their predisposition. (p. 61)

It was found by Bennett (1995) that secondary schools that were organized by subjects and teachers were assigned on the basis of subject expertise, that teachers

> rejected the idea of discussing problems in the staffroom, because to do so was a sign of failure. Failure had to be hidden, and the way to do this was to claim autonomy and discretion. Where teachers could rest their claim to success on specialist knowledge, or acknowledge together that they were facing a totally unknown situation in which everyone's ideas might be helpful, some collaboration, sharing or direction became acceptable. (p. 53)

Elementary teachers don't make claims of subject specialist knowledge. They are usually responsible for the planning and preparation of lesson and materials covering many subject areas. Elementary teachers usually have heterogeneous groupings of students, sometimes including high special needs students. Discussion in staffrooms usually focus on matters of student control and common supervision problems. Anderman and Maehr (1994) noted that in

> the elementary school, students spend most of the day in one classroom, with only one teacher and about 30 other students. In contrast, after the transition to a middle level school, the student usually spends his or her day traveling throughout the school, from one classroom to another classroom, one teacher to another teacher, and one peer group to another peer group. (p. 297)

They further commented that

> in spite of what an individual teacher might do to stress the value of learning for its own sake, to stress the role of effort and progress, to include all within the learning community, these efforts may be undermined if the school as a whole emphasizes grades, competition, and rewards. (p. 297)

Research completed by Eccles, et al. (1993) found that

> the differences . . . obtained between sixth and seventh-grade teachers' sense of efficacy could contribute to the decline in students' beliefs about their academic competency and potential. Futhermore given the group of students with whom teachers are likely to feel least efficacious, lower-achieving students should be most at risk for this effect. (p. 563)

When seeking new staff the principal needs to be aware of the possible predispositions that a teacher may have and how those predispositions will fit with the existing culture of the school and the specific needs of the students. The predispositions of individuals also needs to be considered when a principal is contemplating making changes within the school's existing organization. Staffing changes might conflict with the values and beliefs that have become shared among the existng participants in that school.

All but one of the teachers in this study volunteered to make the transition from elementary schools to junior high schools. Four of the five teachers applied for and were accepted as suitable staff members of their respective junior high schools. Their experiences as they make their career transition to junior high schools was the focus of this study.

Chapter 2

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the conceptual framework on which this research was conceived, designed and undertaken. The underlying assumptions and principles of narrative inquiry found in the literature are discussed in relation to the research design. Since the relationship between the researcher and the researched is of primary importance when conducting a research project requiring collaboration among the participants, the methods used to select participants and to establish and maintain a collegial relationship necessary for the research process is elaborated in some detail. A pilot study had been completed and a brief description of that process is also provided. Ethical considerations are delineated. The trustworthiness of the data is discussed. Finally, the collection and analysis of the data are discussed and a rationale provided for some of the decisions that were made in completing this research.

Research Design

The research method selected for this study of experienced teachers in transition to junior high schools from elementary was narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry focuses on how individual teachers construct meanings and formulate new knowledge as they tell and retell stories of their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) state that this personal experience research is important because:

> Personal experience research is a form of public inquiry that has the potential for transcending the specialties of research in particular subject fields. It does this because personal experience methods connect with fundamentally human qualities of human experience. Personal experience methods are human methods. For this reason the narrative form of the research texts is crucial to the texts' finding a place in public discourse. (p. 425)

In this study, teachers' stories were constructed through a process of collegial conversations which provided opportunities for the teachers and the researcher to reflect on and interpret the teachers' transition experiences. It is through the inclusion of the teacher narrators' stories in this research that "allow for the authentic expression of teachers' experiences and concerns" (Carter, 1993, p. 8). Greene (1990) explains that such interpretations are temporary and context bound.

> The . . . interpretivist study seeks knowledge that comprises the reconstruction of inter subjective meanings, the interpretive understanding of the meanings humans construct in a given context and how these meanings interrelate to form a whole. Any given interpretive reconstruction is idiographic, time- and place-bound. . . (p. 235)

Such research is suffused with the values of the co-researchers and through narrative inquiry these are consciously explored.

> The respect of the autobiographical for "the life", is but one side of a concern to elicit the teacher's voice. . . . this school of qualitative educational research is concerned to listen to what the teacher says, and to respect and deal seriously with those data which the teacher imports into accounts. (Goodson, 1993, p. 18)

The findings from the study are my interpretations of the teachers' stories. Generalizability was not a goal. Instead the goal was "providing sufficient description of the particular context studied so that others may adequately judge the applicability or fit of the inquiry findings to their own context" (Greene, 1990, p. 236). Readers of the study will bring experiences to the reading along with their individual purposes and will judge the value of this research on that basis. It is noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that

> the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible. Even if the applied believes on the basis of the empirical evidence that sending and receiving contexts are sufficiently similar to allow one to entertain the possibility of transfer, he or she is nevertheless well advised to carry out a small verifying study to be certain. (p. 298)

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stated that

> the study of narrative, . . . is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories: teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and others' stories. (p. 2)

It is because the story of experience is personal and evolves with additions and deletions each time it is told, that narrative inquiry is considered the most suitable method for this study. Clandinin (1992) explained narrative inquiry as research where the

> research method builds on this process of growth, that is, on these constructions and reconstructions of personal practical knowledge as we story and restory our lives. Narrative inquiry is the storying and restorying of our narratives of educational experience. (p. 4)

In order to study an experience of an individual, the experience needs to be placed in a context of the whole. In that sense narrative inquiry attempts to be holistic. There are efforts to understand the past, the present, and make projections to the future. Current experiences influence the individual's ability to reflect on the past, recall the current experience, and then project the possible impact of these experiences to the future. Jalango (1992) states that

> this happens because personal narratives are a way of structuring experience itself, laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding life narrative up to the present but directing it into the future. . . as life as led is inseparable from a life as told . . . a life is not how it was but how it is interpreted, told and retold. (p. 69)

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) in describing teacher thinking outline three major benefits realized from teachers' narratives. They are: (1) "studies give us insights into what motivates a teacher's actions, (2) . . . provide detailed cases of teaching dilemmas and events, and (3). . . the most valuable benefit is the insight gained by teachers themselves as a result of this self-inquiry" (p. 42).

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) in their discussion of teacher thinking noted that "teacher narratives of their own interpretations of events that occur in their individual career cycles have not been given sufficient attention in educational research"(p. 37). The design of this study includes the knowledge derived from experience, reflection on experience, and giving voice to the teacher narrators. This study provided the opportunity for the teacher narrators to contribute to the interpretations of their own stories in collaboration with the researcher.

Clandinin (1992) stated that, "looking at life as narrative or storied allows us to see the unities, continuities and discontinuities, images and rhythms in our lives" (p. 3). It is through a process of reflection that we can relive what has gone before, and when we repeat the story it becomes restoried and by doing this we refine the quality of the experience. The sharing of the stories in this research allows the readers to derive their own meanings from the shared experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) noted that

> stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history. (p. 415)

Knowledge gained from studying teacher thinking related to teachers' experiences is gaining popularity in educational research as it has in other social science disciplines. Jalango (1992) indicates that

> education alone remains reluctant to share and value the stories that give form and meaning to our lives as educators. We need to use stories as other professional fields do, to treat stories as little factories of understanding, using them to attract and light up everything relevant in our professional lives. (p. 68)

The notion of reflection is based on the premise that individuals learn from their experiences in a context. The reader in turn brings experiences to the reading of the story and through reflection, takes from the experiences being shared by others an understanding of the experience of others and an addition to their existing understanding of a similar experience. Professional educators formulate stories that are told and retold to those who will listen. When stories are retold about educational experiences, individuals will gain insights which will result in their affirming actions or in changing actions in the future. Dewey (1938) stated the importance of experience in his discussion of "educative or miseducative" experiences. He described a number of types of experiences that can limit the growth of the individual or cause the individual to be placed in a "rut." Any experience that has these effects is "miseducative." Experiences that promote growth within individuals, that cause individuals to be more caring, and to be more in harmony with their environment are educative experiences. Dewey (1938) noted

> there is some kind of continuity in any case since every experience affects for better or worse the attitudes which help decide the quality of further experiences, by setting up certain preferences and aversions, and making it easier or harder to act for this or that end. Moreover, every experience influences in some degree the objective conditions under which further experiences are had. (p. 37)

Experiences affect different individuals in different ways. Dewey (1938) indicates that we have a disposition to react to certain experiences. Stories told by colleagues would promote different reactions in teachers depending on their particular inclinations, values, beliefs. Duckworth (1986) states that "people must construct their own knowledge and must assimilate new experiences in ways that make sense to them" (p. 481).

"There is in story, in other words, a personification and a patterning of events around a theme or figure of significance to a particular culture" (Carter, 1993, p. 6). The reader of stories needs to bring to the experience the

sensibility to derive meaning from the told stories so that they can relate the story to their own lived experiences or derive some understanding or empathy for those that have lived and told the story of an experience. Eisner (1988) discussed kinds of experiences being dependent upon our senses:

> If our senses were impaired, whether through injury, genetic defect, or miseducation, our ability to experience the qualities of the world would suffer. Qualities we cannot experience, we cannot know. (p. 15)

Not only is it important to consider what encourages teachers to accommodate new learnings but it is also important to identify those influences derived from past experience which impede or enhance the sense of self for a teacher in a new situation.

Reflection on experience, built upon knowledge and the senses, is key to the process. Clandinin (1992) stated that teachers are seen as having

> personal practical knowledge as in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body and in the person's future plans and actions. It is knowledge that reflects the individual's prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of the teacher's knowledge. It is a kind of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection. (p. 4)

Reflection on experience or actions, fundamental to narrative inquiry, was described by Schon (1987) as an "appreciation system." Teachers, rather than base their knowledge on recognized beliefs and practices of what effective education should be, reflect on everyday problems and refer it to their appreciation system. The teacher's appreciation system, therefore, consists of practices, values and beliefs. It is the relationship of practices and values that affects the decisions teachers make in given situations. It is the relationship between educational theory, knowledge derived from experience, current situations and the teacher's ability to reflect on that relationship that generates teachers' stories.

Summary of My Personal Story of Career Transition

As part of a course that I had taken at the university I wrote my own story of career transition from elementary school to junior high school. That story is summarized to provide some insight as to why this research was of particular interest to me. The telling of the story again and again over time

has helped me deal with the challenges that I faced because of the experience. The story changes as some information is forgotten and new information is added, other information is deleted, or information is modified.

I had been a successful elementary teacher for about fifteen years. During that time, I had taught Grades 1 through 6. I had enjoyed most of my elementary teaching experiences and had established a good reputation in the community where I taught. I was feeling a need for a change, a new challenge, a chance to experiment with techniques and to experience program materials that I would find more personally interesting. I had become familiar with some junior high students that lived in our community and found them to be enjoyable and yet realized that they were facing many challenges and questions in their lives.

I applied for and was accepted to teach in a small elementary/junior high school. The principal had made it plain that he was not that happy with how some of the junior high program was being taught and wanted to see if I could apply some elementary teaching practices to the junior high program. I was given the assignment of teaching Grade 7, 8 and 9 Social Studies, and Grade 8 Language Arts and Drama. I was told that my classes would consist of about twenty students. The previous teachers had been using a lot of short answer response exercises with the students. The children had not been involved in much group work or creative activities in the school.

I soon discovered that the reality of my new situation was very different from what had been described by the school administration. The Grade 8 and 9 Social Studies classes had 36 and 34 students respectively. Many of the students had severe discipline problems and most of the students had never experienced group activities, research, or creative tasks. The Grade 8 Language Arts classes wanted to be spoon fed the material. Many of the students were not able to read at grade level and many of those that could did not want to. They were very comfortable answering low level thinking questions that required very little thought or effort on their part.

I soon started to experience a great deal of anger and frustration over the situation in which I found myself. The apathy and lack of respect exhibited by the students to me and to learning made every day a struggle. The situation I found myself in was not the one I thought I had accepted. I was further frustrated and angered that when I sought advice and help from others the usual response was that I was brightand was an excellent teacher

with a good reputation. By implication, I would figure it out. I had a hard time figuring it out. I would go into my classes shaking at the prospect of what might happen in that class. I found that I could not ignore students calling teachers' names because the teacher asked them to do some work. I found that I could not pretend that I did not hear what some students were saying to each other. The entire situation angered and bothered me. I was determined that I would survive.

At Christmas time I injured my back. It meant that I was home for three weeks. I used this time to reflect on what had been happening in the school and on the pressures that were being placed on me to do a task that was impossible to do given the circumstances. I resigned myself to the fact that I would have to resort to the answer sheet and the short answer question. I would have to limit the tasks that would require the students to work in groups or to think creatively. I would have to become the teacher that I had replaced and I didn't like the prospect.

I did manage to establish rapport with a strong core of the students by coaching the school basketball team. A group of the students came to me and asked if I would coach the team for them. The Physical Education teacher did not want to make the time commitment because he played in a hockey league after school and knew that there would be time conflicts. By giving my time to this activity for the students it meant that I had a group of student leaders, the athletes, in my classes who would support me and the rest of the students would not want to upset this group.

I survived the year. I had taught the students in a way that I did not like to teach. I was not off on long term disability. I did vow that I would never again teach junior high school. When I returned from my studies at university, I returned to a Grade 6 elementary classroom with a group of students that had, in the previous five years, had a least one teacher a year go on long term disability. I made it through that year as well. This particular group of students had remained fairly static for a few years. They had learned that they could literally threaten and terrorize teachers. The first day that I was in the class, a Grade 6 boy stood up, pointed his finger at me, and simply advised me that they had driven every teacher before me out and they were going to do the same to me. I looked the student right in the eye and made the bet that he would be gone before I was. He was gone in February, arrested for doing "break and enters."

My own story of making a career transition from elementary school to junior high schools provided me with some insight into some of the problems and experiences that a teacher might experience. I was brought to the junior high school to modify some of its existing practices. I found that my task was impossible. I began to adopt the existing practices of the school and adopted the norms and values of that school culture to ensure my own survival. I still don't feel that I did a good job that year, but I did the best I could given the circumstances.

During the experience of moving from being an elementary teacher to becoming a junior high teacher I experienced many difficulties and challenges to my belief system about what a teacher should be, how teaching should be done and how to relate to the students and parents. Part of the experience were the questions that developed on how an administrator might best offer support and advice to anyone experiencing the same self doubts and dilemmas that I encountered. I felt that I was the only person in the world to be experiencing these problems. My sense of self as a competent teacher was in jeopardy. Not only my professional life was being affected by the experience but the effects of the stress that I was experiencing affected my personal life and my ability to function properly in other areas. I thought it would be interesting to investigate to find if others had similar or very different experiences. The area of a career transition for experienced teachers was not extensively researched and it seemed to be an area worthy of study.

Pilot Study

In May of 1993 I undertook a pilot study under the guidance of my supervisor by working with one teacher narrator who was experiencing the same career transition process discussed in this research.

This project was undertaken for a number of reasons: (1) for the researcher to gain experience in doing a narrative research project, (2) to determine if the methodology was appropriate, (3) to gain insight from a teacher narrator about the process, (4) to explore ways of presenting the data so that the independent voices of the researcher and the teacher narrator could be maintained while providing rich descriptive data for the reader.

The final draft of the pilot study project was presented in the "Research Proposal" for this current research. June's Story contained valuable insights

about her career transition and it was considered suitable for inclusion in this research.

Selection of Participants

The criteria for the selection of the participants were that they recently taught in elementary schools, had relocated to junior high school teaching positions in the 1994 - 1995 school term and were willing to participate in the study with full knowledge of all ethical considerations. June, experienced the career transition in the 1992 - 1993 school year and participated in the pilot study.

Two large urban school districts were asked to provide access to possible participants. The school districts contacted possible participants who were in the process of a career transition from elementary to junior high schools. These teachers were asked to contact me to discuss the research and to determine their suitability for this research. Six teachers responded to the request.

Two of the six teachers decided not to participate for various reasons. The remaining four teachers volunteered to participate with a full understanding of what their role would be in this research and the time required for their participation. In this report, the four teachers have been given fictional names of their own choice. They had varied teaching experiences in elementary schools and were embarking on a career transition to junior high schools. The teacher narrator used in the pilot project allowed the data from that process to be included with this research. The story for each of the five teacher narrators are reported in Chapter 3.

The Process of Narrative Inquiry

> Stories about teaching enable us to organize, articulate, and communicate what we believe about teaching and to reveal, in narrative style, what we have become as educators. . . . Each of us must find our own path to professional fulfillment. Teacher stories contribute to that process of discovery. (Jalango, 1992, p. 69)

First, the researcher must obtain permission from teachers to intrude in their lives. The relationship between the researcher and the researched for narrative inquiry is collaborative. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) refer to the collaborative relationship as being "empowering." The relationship is

empowering because it involves "equality, caring, and mutual purpose and intention" (p. 4).

This research was designed to give voice to the teachers as co-researchers by listening to their stories, soliciting their help with the organization and writing of their stories, and by reaching agreement on the content and the intent of the stories. The analysis and interpretations of the stories was done primarily by myself. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) noted that

> the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard. The . . . importance of the mutual construction of the research relationship, a relationship in which both practitioners and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories. (p. 4)

A number of different techniques are appropriate for narrative inquiry and have been described by Connelly and Clandinin (1990). The methods suggested are field texts, oral histories, annals and chronicles, family stories, photographs and artifacts, research interviews, journals, autobiographical writings, letters, conversations, field notes, and other stories from the field.

Having also experienced a transition from elementary to junior high school, I added to the complexity and depth of thought in the teacher narrators' stories by asking for clarification on points of interest. The process of clarification and expansion to the teachers' stories was done during the interviews and at the beginning of the next interview after we each had a chance to review the transcripts. It was important for me to maintain the focus on the story of the participant and not steer their stories in a certain direction based on my own beliefs or assumptions derived from my own personal experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) summarized narrative research methods as being

> the study of personal experience (which is) simultaneously focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. By inward we mean the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions and so on. By outward we mean existential conditions . . . , the environment. . . . By backward and forward we are referring to temporality, past, present, and future. To experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. (p. 417)

The major technique selected for this research was "research interviews" because it allows for extended conversations about the teachers'

experiences. It was important that the teacher narrators and I have time for our collaborative efforts in the formation and interpretations of the stories. An important element of the interview process is that not only the words be of significance but the gestures, the tone, and the inflection used by the teller and the listener become part of the interpretations of the stories. It is for this reason that field notes were made and referred to when interviews were being transcribed and the stories were being formulated.

Method

Discussions were held between the researcher and the teacher narrators. These discussions were conversational in tone. The use of informal conversations was chosen because they allowed the teacher narrators more flexibility and freedom of opinion and did not give the appearance of assumptions or opinions being predetermined by the researcher.

After the initial contact with the teacher narrators, appointments were made to meet at various times and places. The initial contact and appointments for meetings were made by phone. Susanne and I made a series of appointments at our first meeting and then changed them if the need arose. The other teachers and I booked appointments when previous conversations had been transcribed and they had had the opportunity to review their comments and were ready to continue our conversations. Sometimes making appointments was difficult since all of us were full time teachers. Often professional and personal responsibilities made finding convenient times difficult.

June, Robert and Gail and I met at their schools either in their classrooms or in the staffroom. Susanne and I met at the university and talked in an empty classroom. She felt that this meeting place would be more convenient for her and would allow us more privacy. Wayne and I met at a local health club where I was a member and it was close to his home for evening or early morning talks on weekends.

The number of conversations varied with each teacher narrator. The conversations, which lasted between one and two hours each, were tape recorded and transcribed. Each of the conversations began with small talk about what had happened during the day, about difficulties getting to the meeting, and about problems with school children or, if applicable, our own children. The initial conversations, primarily dealt with each teacher

narrator's professional background and experiences. At each subsequent conversation, we began by referring to the previous transcribed conversation. The teacher narrators were asked to highlight any area of the transcript that they wished to discuss further for various reasons. I then did the same. This process generally led to new information being added to existing stories and to new stories. While the teacher narrators were sharing their stories, I encouraged them to elaborate on certain points by asking questions or relating a story from my own previous experience. These stimulus points encouraged the teachers to add more detailed information and demonstrated that I was listening to the content of what was being said.

After each conversation, typed transcripts were returned to the teacher narrators so that they could be checked for accuracy and to give the teachers the opportunity to add or delete thoughts that they felt were or were not relevant. They were asked to delete or highlight any comment that they felt might cause them harm if it was to be used in the final report. I also reviewed each transcript and highlighted those areas of their comments that I would like to have clarified or to have the teacher narrator revisit as they continued to revisit their own stories.

The teacher narrators expressed concern when they reviewed the transcripts of the conversations about the grammar and pauses that were evident as they related their thoughts and feelings. They were assured that these apparent problems would be corrected in the final document. Revisions were then made to the transcripts where necessary.

Field notes were recorded after each session with a teacher narrator. These tape-recorded field notes highlighted my impressions of the interview, the perceived current well-being of the teacher narrator, how I perceived the feeling tone of each experience and my impressions of the willingness of the teacher narrator to continue with the research. The tape was reviewed by myself before the conversation was transcribed and before the stories were formulated.

To formulate the stories for each of the teacher narrators it was necessary to take each of the transcripts and to classify the thoughts into various categories that appeared to be common among the stories. The classifications were: (1) their personal history up to the time of their current career transition, (2) elementary school teaching experiences, (3) how they found their new position, (4) the way the new school was organized for

instruction, (5) the way they related to their students, (6) relationship with parents, (7) relationships with school administration, (8) their personal philosophy of teaching and education, (9) their personal well-being during the transition, and (10) their future career plans. The organization and classification of the teacher narrators' thoughts were revisited a number of times with reclassification occurring when necessary. From this process the stories of career transition for each teacher narrator were written.

When the stories were formulated, interpretation and reinterpretation occurred. This is a process of checking for agreed understanding, asking for elaboration of points, and adding new insights to the story.

To maintain the integrity of the research process the dominance of "voice" was considered when formulating the report. It is possible that I could have relinquished my voice to the teacher narrators. The opposite is true as well. I had experienced a career transition from elementary school teaching to junior high teaching and had strong feelings about my own experience. It was necessary for me to attempt to control any bias that I might have about what was being expressed by each of the teacher narrators. Consequently a balance of "voices" was needed to maintain the purpose of the research. Unfortunately there does not appear to be any principles that govern this balance. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) state that:

> Personal experience methods inevitably are relationship methods. As researchers we cannot work with participants without sensing the fundamental human connection among us; nor can we create research text without imagining a relationship to you, our audience. Voice and signature make it possible for there to be conversations through the texts among participants, researchers, and audiences. (p. 29)

In order to retain the teachers' voices, I chose to present their stories in a separate chapter. After the stories were written and checked for accuracy of thoughts and feelings, they were reviewed and analyzed to determine if some common themes emerged from the stories. The development of themes in this research enabled me to formulate meanings, to simplify the content of the stories, to draw attention to parts of the text, and to help understand the phenomenon of teacher career transitions. The development of themes further enabled me to provide the reader with my insights about the experiences of the five teacher narrators. van Manen (1990) defined these as "reflective understanding." He noted that

> we try to unearth something "telling," something "meaningful," something "thematic" in the various experiential accounts-we work at mining meaning from them. (p. 86)

The common themes identified are: (1) Seeking Professional Challenges, (2) Facing Changing Relationships, (3) Coping with Isolation from Peers, (4) Questioning their Professional Identity, and (5) Personal-Professional Thoughts. Each theme was then discussed and related to relevant information found in the literature.

Trustworthiness

As part of the methodology of this research, each of the conversations and drafts of the teacher's stories were given to each of the teacher narrators to be checked for accuracy, revised, or modified. Each of the teacher narrators had the opportunity to contribute to the identification of themes that appeared to emerge from their contributions to this research.

In order to maintain credibility, dependability and transferability it was deemed necessary to include the teachers' stories in this research and not base the research on the discussion of the themes that emerged from the conversations. It is necessary that enough data be presented so that as the research is shared, others can determine that there are elements of truth in what is being said and how it is being said. It is therefore necessary that extensive descriptions of each teacher narrator's experiences of career transition be presented.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) discussed "narrative truth" and what is seen as a "plausible account" which is

> one that tends to ring true. It is an account of which one might say "I can see that happening." Thus although fantasy may be an invitational element in fictional narrative, plausibility exerts firmer tugs in empirical narrative. (p. 8)

Barone (1992) stated that "quality control"

> will be maintained if accessibility, compellingness, and moral persuasiveness. . . serve as criteria for judging the professional worth of educational stories. . . . Accessible and compelling stories that fail to offer empirical, nonstereotypical portraits of school people will not be judged professionally worthy. (p. 21)

It is also necessary for me to bring to the attention of the reader my own experience of career transition from elementary school teaching to

junior high teaching and how that possible bias might be taken it into consideration when reviewing this research.

The research advisor played an active role throughout the research, offering ideas and making suggestions about further areas of inquiry with the teacher narrators. This research report was also shared with teaching colleagues who expressed interest in the subject and were invited to make comments.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations as outlined by the University of Alberta, Department of Educational Administration were adhered to in the process of doing this research project. The ethical considerations were:

1. all participants in the research will be anonymous,
2. the participants were fully informed about the research and its purpose before the research commenced,
3. the participants were informed of their rights to withdraw their participation at any time during the process and to remove any of their own comments from the final report that they felt were misinterpreted or might cause them harm,
4. all precautions were taken to ensure that no harm of any kind, either professional or personal, could result from their participation in this research, and
5. the participants will be informed if presentations or publications are done using the information given in this research.

Summary

As a result of the methods of research described in this chapter individual career transition stories were completed for each of the five teacher narrators. The teacher narrators' stories were checked for accuracy and are presented in Chapter 3.

Various themes emerging from the teachers' stories and discussions were identified and discussed in Chapter 4.

The discussion of the research findings, implications for further research or practice, along with my reflections of the process and the research in general are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3
TEACHER NARRATORS' STORIES

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide the reader with some insight about each of the five teacher narrators who kindly volunteered to participate in this study. A brief description is given of their educational backgrounds, their employment history up to the time of their current career transition, why they decided to leave elementary schools and move to junior high schools, how they went about making the move, their relationships with students, teachers and administrators, their philosophy of teaching, how they are feeling about the move, and what each teacher narrator feels about their future careers in education. Comparisons between their elementary school teaching experiences and their junior high teaching experiences is either stated or implied throughout their stories. A few of the stories told by the teacher narrators were omitted from the final report because of ethical considerations.

Susanne's Career Transition

Susanne, a teacher in her early 40s, had very strong feelings about why she wanted to teach at a level "above" elementary school. She did not see herself as a "mother hen" and wanted to be in a situation where her specialized knowledge would be used to a greater extent. Susanne is trained in French language instruction. She felt that teaching Extended French in the elementary school did not allow her the opportunity to use her language skills as much as she would like and as she was trained to teach at the secondary school level wanted to make the move when possible. Susanne explained her frustrations in working with younger students:

> I thought I would enjoy the older children more. They are more independent. I am not crazy about playing the mother hen role. I think the junior highs are more independent. From my observations the elementary kids can sometimes even call you mom. I don't deal well with that. . . . [Junior high was my preference] because of the content that I was teaching. I didn't find the elementary very challenging. It became somewhat monotonous.

Susanne's Education and Employment Background

Susanne attended the University of Alberta, Faculty of Education, taking Secondary Education with training in the teaching of French as a second language. She enjoyed the challenge of mastering French and enjoyed her university experiences. She graduated in the early 1980s. When she

graduated there were fewer positions in education than there had been in the 70s. She was offered a position with a large urban school district teaching Extended French to Grades 4, 5, 6, and 7. She was not totally happy in this position because it was only .7 teaching time and was primarily at the elementary level. She realized that the position did not match her training:

> I took the position because it was the first one that was available and it was when jobs were scarce enough. Not as scarce as they are today. If you were able to land a job it was great so I had the Extended French. So that was my first year. But I went through the secondary route.

Susanne found that for the second year her time was about to be cut to .5 teaching time because of the changing distribution of students in the elementary/junior high school. Her administrator helped her to find a full time teaching position in another elementary school. The scope of her teaching was starting to change. She disliked the lack of consistency in her work from year to year:

> I had Grades 4, 5, and 6 Extended French again and I also had other things such as E.S.L. [English as a Second Language] one year and another year I had enrichment immersion, resource room, and anything else where they needed a person to do a part-time job with small groups. I wasn't a home room teacher.

At the same school, Susanne finally got a Grade 6 French Immersion classroom. However she faced another disappointment. There was a staffing problem in the school that caused her to have to teach the English component in two classes because another teacher who was able to teach the French Immersion was not able to teach English. Susanne lost some of her French instruction time to accommodate the staffing difficulty. She explained:

> One year I couldn't teach French at all because the French Immersion teacher didn't have very good command of English. Some of the parents suggested to the principal that they would like someone who had a better command of English. So the principal made me switch and I taught that teacher's L.A. and she taught my French.

Susanne stayed in that school for six years. She then thought that she had been there long enough and tried to make a change. She found a position teaching a Grade 3/4 class full time in a very small elementary school. She found that the Grade 3 students in particular were just too young for her. She noted:

> I took a position at a very small elementary school. It was the first time they offered French at the school and I had a combined Grade 3/4 class. For the first year I did not enjoy the 3s. They were too young. It was

> really bad. I remember we went to the Bennett Center and one of the Grade 3 kids was actually so home sick that we had to call mom to pick her up. I can't deal with this. So I stayed there one year.

Susanne got lucky. She managed to get a job in a junior high school teaching Grade 7, 8, and 9 French, Math, and Science. She stayed in this position for three years. She noted her reasons for leaving.

> I would have liked to stay at that school. The last year that I was there we had a new administrator and I think the kids clue in really quickly as to what they can get away with and what they can't. If you're not going to get backing from the administrator you might as well forget it. I had one year of that and I thought, I can't deal with this. I'll take any job anywhere to get out. At that time there were not many junior high positions available or a lot of movement among the teachers. I went back to an elementary school with the principal with whom I had worked for six years in my second school. I stayed for three more years. I decided that I had enough of elementary schools.

At this point in Susanne's career she returned to the University of Alberta on a sabbatical leave from her school district to work on a Bachelor of Science degree. This was in the 1993 - 1994 school term. When she was nearing completion of her leave she started the search for a new position in a junior high school.

Finding a New Position

When teachers take sabbatical leaves to do further study at the university, they are not only on leave from their school districts, they are on leave from their schools. The positions that they left are filled by other teachers with those teachers' understanding that it might be for one year only if the teacher on sabbatical decides to return to the school. Susanne did not want to return to that school so submitted a voluntary transfer request in the spring of her sabbatical year.

Susanne found that there were not many choices that year in the first round of teacher placements. She commented about the process of seeking a new position in a junior high school:

> I had two choices of junior highs. I could have waited but I was in the, what was called, the voluntary transfers. There were not that many choices. I asked around about the administrators. Basically I had two choices. [Principal's name] just by what he said convinced me that his was a good school and that I would be happy there. So I thought, if I'm going to step back into the real challenging world, I'll go for it and hope that I am not going blindly, but I'm finding that it is a big job.

Susanne accepted the position at the above mentioned school for two reasons: (1) the principal of the school had an excellent reputation for being very supportive of his teaching staff, and (2) the school was new and was equipped with the latest technology. Susanne was given the opportunity to experience the school before she was to start on her own in the following fall. When she finished her classes in the spring, she joined the staff of the school until the end of the year on a short term contract. She noted:

> I was there before the end of the school year. I finished university in the last part of April so I thought, well I would like to get the feel of things. I'll visit and see if I could sit in on some of the classes. I was hired to be on a team with three teachers. They kind of had a team leader so I mostly sat in on his class. The kids seemed to enjoy what they were doing and I was quite impressed how well they were behaved. At times I could not quite understand or follow how one would be able to have the three different grades in one room. . . . They have cross grade groupings in each class. You were supposed to individualize the instruction. From my observation it was more like a Grade 9 math class. . . . I couldn't understand how they were working as a group.

School Organization

Susanne had decided to join a school that had been experimenting with a new model of junior high education. Cross grade grouping requires that a teacher take a group of students who would ordinarily be in Grades 7, 8, and 9 and teach that group the core subject areas of Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science. This organization troubled Susanne.

> I don't understand the multi-grade grouping. I walked out of there not really understanding how it worked. When colleagues of mine asked me how I was going to do it and what my assignment was, I didn't have an answer for them. I tried to look for information, some resources, and there was very little.

Susanne was assigned a multi-grade grouping of Grades 7, 8, and 9. She would be responsible for teaching all of the core subjects to them along with Health and Physical Education. Susanne did not see the sense in doing a lot of preparation before school actually started. She did take a refresher course at the university over the summer in math. She started out the school year feeling apprehensive about her assignment. She was assigned a class of Grade 9 students who had been in the multi-grade class setting for their previous two years in junior high. This made preparation and selection of materials difficult when she had to meet the needs of the students and teach the Grade 9 curriculum. She noted:

> I was assigned a class of 9s who had been in a multi-grade setting so I would have 7 to 9. I couldn't do a whole lot of preparing because I knew that I couldn't do a crash course on my own, learning the 7, 8, and 9 curriculum in four areas. There is no way. And it is all new to me. I had some Grade 7 math and science experience. I also, this summer went to a four day workshop at the university in math, and that helped. I wasn't that worried about math and science because I have a pretty good background in those areas. It was social studies and the language arts that I was somewhat concerned about.

The staff in the school were organized in teams so that teachers could assist each other when necessary. Susanne had to teach physical education to her own class. She was lucky. The school was large and two classes of gym were going on at one time. A team member, more experienced in gym, taught the lessons and Susanne helped with the supervision and encouragement of the students.

Susanne saw that the organization of the school not only created problems for the teachers in that they had to learn a lot of material, it also created problems for the students. As was noted earlier, the bulk of what she had observed in the classrooms was Grade 9 content. She felt that by the time the students had spent three years in these classrooms they felt that they were getting the same material over and over again. These feelings among the students and their parents was probably the main reason that the concept of multi- grade groupings in that junior high school was being phased out. Susanne recognized how the students and she felt about the confusion and stress that it caused students and herself:

> They [the students] think that they have done it. You find that it is a constant thing. I'm trying to figure out why I'm fighting some of the battles that I am fighting now. I can understand from the kids' point of view that they have been exposed to, let's say the environment unit, and we are using the same Grade 9 text that was used last year and they are seeing the same pictures again. It is the prescribed text, you can't just take things out of the air. You can't just build your own curriculum or material. So it is a battle.

Susanne noted what would be happening to the concept of multi-grade groupings in the 1995 - 1996 school term at her school. She noted:

> Next year there won't be any. The only thing is the options. I'm teaching a French option. Every teacher teaches their class an option. There will be no multi-grade groupings in the core subjects, mainly because of a lack of interest. This year the enrollment in Grade 7 was so low for the multi-grade that we were only having two classes with all three grades.

Susanne felt that the multi-grade groups was not the best thing for all students. Some students that she had seemed to have made some adjustments and were quite good at "cooperative learning strategies," but she believed that it was not the best organization for many of the students.

> For a particular type of student it is not necessarily the best. It is not for everybody. I can tell you that for some in my class it has not been a positive experience because I don't have individual desks, there are tables. I have taken the cooperative teaching strategies workshop and I know that it does work for some kids and that it shouldn't be 100% of the time. There are some kids in my class who really need time on their own and to do their own work. . . . What I have found is that some of them, when they are sitting together and you say work together, help each other, instead they will copy each others' answers straight off their paper and refuse to do it on their own.

The teaching staff in the school were divided into teams. According to Susanne, team planning time was designed not for the preparation and sharing of materials, but as time where the teachers could talk about individual students and seek advice from the other teachers in the team. Susanne felt very much like an outsider throughout the school year. She noted that many of the teachers on the staff had previously come from elementary school backgrounds. She did not imagine that many of them had many materials that could be shared with anyone because they had to change things from year to year because of the multi-grade class grouping. Susanne commented:

> I don't imagine coming from elementary that they have a lot of developed materials themselves because this is their third year and each year I suppose they had the three levels in each class so that each year you would have to change the materials. I suspect that they don't have a lot of hands-on materials to pass along. It seems such a waste of time in a sense. I am creating my own notes. I am creating my own exams. It is like reinventing the wheel. In the other junior high we could go to the person who was in charge of the subject and you knew that they were more experienced than you and that they had a good background in whatever. . . . It is not that they are not willing to help but I think that I have to ask the right questions and learning the curriculum in four core areas, there isn't a lot of specific questions that I could ask. So I just carry on.

Susanne found that because the school was changing its student grouping plan, some of the students in the school were on the old plan and some were on the new plan and it created some difficulties in her class. She taught her students for most of the day. Her students were only given a short break in the morning between periods 2 and 3. While she was trying to work

with her students in her classroom, classes on the other program were changing classes and moving through the halls. This meant that while she was trying to keep her students attentive to the task there were slamming lockers and students making noise in the halls. Susanne described the problem:

> I notice one problem where I am at. There is a traditional program and between every class the kids are out in their lockers and so my kids are distracted. During the break they are supposed to have 5 minutes. Somedays, I am sure, it is more like 15 minutes. . . . I do like having the kids all day though, you can go after them for work or their behavior because they are stuck with you. I do believe that for some kids it is really, really good.

One of the reasons that Susanne was attracted to the school was the emphasis on all the latest technology that can be used in schools. Susanne had mixed feelings about this aspect of the school's organization and its impact on the culture of the school. She felt isolated:

> I have my own personal computer and we do attendance on them, e-mail etc. That is another thing, there is no, is no, what is the word, personal contact. We can sit in front of that machine and we can give messages to one another or use the phone. We have a phone in our classes as well. So if I chose not to go out in the hallway to go to my neighbor's class or the staffroom, I may not see anyone [other teachers] all day.

Susanne and the Students

The major difficulty that Susanne was having with the students was that they had come to her classroom from multi-grade classes in the previous two years of their junior high experience. She noted that, unlike other classes where the students had remained with the teachers they had had in the previous year, her students were new to her and they knew that she was not familiar with what they had studied before. Susanne outlined her class situation:

> The kids that I am working with were in the multi-grade program and they have lost their teachers. They are a mixture from all the different programs. I think the other problem is that when they were in Grade 7 and 8 they were exposed to the Grade 9 program. These kids were exposed to the Grade 9 science curriculum or in math or whatever and they have seen the topic. They have worked in the textbooks already. So that is another thing that I am having to deal with. I can't make it interesting enough for them because it is not novel. If it's not novel, then it's boring.

One of the concepts that the school encouraged was that the students work in teams. The classrooms were equipped with tables rather than individual desks. Susanne felt that the students did not know how to work individually and when they did work in teams it was not being done properly. This made her work difficult and created situations for confrontation with the students. Susanne commented that:

> students work on teams as team members so many of them don't know how to work individually. Not that they know how to work on teams because they do a lot of copying when they are supposed to be working together. Another thing I noticed is that I don't have individual desks and it just changes the atmosphere for the kids. So there is a lot of things that you are fighting. No matter how well I did the curriculum or how interesting I made it, there is still that other aspect of it. Once the current multi-grade kids are gone then things will get back to normal.

Susanne faced a real disappointment as far as her students were concerned. One of the reasons that she wanted to leave elementary school was the lack of maturity of the students. She had built up the expectation that things were going to be different. She had a Grade 9 class. She and the students were going to be able to do a lot of interesting things together. Susanne wanted to work hard to get her students ready for high school. What she discovered was that:

> after being off for the one year and going back to this team and Grade 9 I thought, great. They are more mature. They have gone through Grade 7 and 8. They want to be ready for high school. I am really looking forward to this year. After the first day I realized that this isn't going to be so. I think part of the problem was I built myself up to these wonderful things that could happen and I find that I am struggling to make it happen and they [the students] are not.

Susanne generally had fairly positive feelings about the group of students that she had in the classroom. She felt that for the most part they could be trusted and she didn't feel threatened by them. She said that:

> you know, kids aren't bad. It is their attitude about learning that bothers me. It is not that they will do anything bad but I will not leave them in the room by themselves because I have three kids in there who are really immature and they will chase each other and they could hurt each other while they are playing. They could bash into the walls and wreck my displays and that type of thing, not to be malicious. So I won't leave them in the room.

Susanne spent a considerable amount of time during the conversations discussing some of the occurrences that had happened with some of her

students. She related an incident that occurred during a parent-teacher conference after the report cards had been issued. She felt that by spending a little time with the parent, she was gaining some insight into why some of the students were having the problems they were and why they appeared apathetic about school and learning. She described an interview that she had had with one parent as:

> explaining the relationship between the mother and the daughter. The mother could not say what she expected of the child. I was mentioning the defiance, lack of cooperation, and that she was not working hard enough because she was unable to focus. I had this child secluded in an individual desk because she was disruptive and still she would shout across the room. The mother just said that she felt that the child was isolated and she did not like the situation. And I thought, well lady what do you want. I think I learned more about the kids looking at my class averages. I thought it would really hit home. The parents would realize how really low they are. But it didn't seem to affect them. . . . Yes, I do see the apathy and yes it does exist. I will do what I can. It is not my imagination. I just can't believe the number of students that are apathetic in my class.

Susanne further noted that the parents hinted that their child could do better,

> but they did not get after their child much. . . . One parent said that the same thing happened last year. It takes awhile for their kids to get into it. That sort of thing. But they were positive toward their child. They were not hard on them.

Susanne remembered back to the Grade 6 class that she had taught in an elementary school. She found that in many ways they were more mature than the Grade 9 students that she had wanted to teach so badly. The Grade 6s were willing to do homework or they were willing to stay after school to complete work. It was not a battle to get things done. Susanne did not find the junior high students to be as mature as she had hoped:

> I didn't see as much apathy. Maybe the kids managed to hide it better. The junior high kids are more straight forward. I saw that the Grade 6 kids were interested in what we were doing. The Grade 6s that I worked with a couple of years ago, if their work was not done, they would stay and get it done. With the Grade 9s it is harder to enforce that. You try to give them more rope than with the 6s. I also noticed that in junior high they don't want the other to know that they are not doing well because it is embarrassing. They will be called "nerd" and they don't like that. I don't know if it is part of my class or my school or community. It is not popular to do well in school. That's a real shame.

Susanne felt that she got support from the school administration when she needed the help. She did feel that she did not have to call on the school administration often in this school. She related an incident when one of her female students decided to defy her by not sitting down when asked to do so. The student was given a reason for the request, "they were covering some new science material." The student continued to refuse to be cooperative. Susanne called for help from the administration. It was dealt with by the office and the student complied.

Susanne's Philosophy

Susanne was disappointed when she found what she faced with her Grade 9 class. The apathy of the students and the parents bothered her and she did not know how to combat that situation. Susanne felt that when the students had reached Grade 9 and were preparing for high school that they would be more willing to work and be receptive to the ideas that she wanted to share with them. She was feeling very frustrated.

Susanne discussed the lack of cooperation and shared planning among the teachers on the staff even though there was an apparent mechanism to accommodate this activity. Susanne felt isolated in a large, modern, technology-oriented school. Some teachers on the staff apparently enjoyed the lack of personal contact but Susanne felt that she would have benefited from a role model or a mentor. She noted:

> You will hear teachers say that it is great that you don't have to walk and get varicose veins. But I really feel that it is important to have that personal contact. At least it is for me because that is how I function best. I am not a leader. I am a follower. If I really believe that the person that I am following is right in what they are doing I can be more productive rather than having to spin tires on my own. I think that it is really hard to compare one junior high to another. Each is really different and unique.

Susanne felt that support by the administration for the efforts of the teachers was really important regardless of whether the teachers were in a junior high or an elementary school. She had left a school because of the lack of administrative support and when she decided to try a junior high school, she did research on the various administrators that she was talking to so as to ensure that they would be supportive of her in the classroom. She had no complaints about her current administrators. She felt that they were doing everything that they possibly could to make the school a better place for the

teachers and the students. The administrators were responding to the concerns of the community about the multi-grade classes and they were being eliminated. Susanne felt that this step would ease a lot of the tensions that existed in the school. The administrators in the school would come into the classroom and assist her with problems when she was not able to deal with them. Susanne did feel that the administrators were trying to encourage cooperative work among the teachers, but in that area they were failing. Susanne felt that work in this area would make her work easier and that mentors would emerge to help with curriculum problems.

Susanne did believe strongly in sticking to the prescribed curriculum and the prescribed text books. She noted earlier the problems that this was causing her in the classroom when the students complained. She was either unwilling, or lacked the knowledge or time to do anything about this apparent problem. She noted this difficulty as related to the school having a philosophy of individualizing instruction and materials.

Susanne's Well-Being During the Transition

Susanne had strong feelings of being isolated. This feeling was discussed earlier. She did not feel that the teachers cooperated with each other well. She did not know what anybody else was doing in their classrooms. Susanne noted that she did not even have to see anybody else if she didn't want to because of the technology in the school. She was experiencing a lot of stress. Susanne had taken some steps to deal with some of her perceived difficulties:

> It seems that everybody else is able to cope and I live school and yet I feel that I am struggling. I spend a lot of time trying to learn the content and have gone to inservices downtown and I talk to the consultants and I went out of my way to take a four day math course through the department at the university. I have full confidence in my ability as a teacher of math and science and yet it seems like if I had someone working with me and bouncing our ideas back and forth that I could be more productive.

Susanne was feeling very frustrated with the students. Because the students were not what she had anticipated she was not able to do the things that she wanted to do with the older children. She noted how she had to adopt a style that she did not like to over use in her teaching. She mentioned that she liked the students to work in groups, but

> seat work to me is not the ideal thing. They don't participate in discussions. You encourage them. You ask them to participate. They don't. I don't know. They really don't care. They don't want to participate. In Grade 9 a lot of stuff is cut and dry.

Susanne had a personal friend who was very ill. She was making plans to do some traveling to France with him if his health permitted. She was spending a considerable amount of her non- teaching time looking after and helping her friend. This situation was adding to the stress she was experiencing.

Susanne's Plans for the Future

Susanne hoped to remain at the school for another year. Because of the declining enrollments in the school, the administrator may have to declare someone surplus. The principal of the school has indicated to Susanne that she would probably be there but wasn't sure exactly what she would be teaching. He was able to tell her that her assignment would probably be in a traditional junior high program. It would not be a core program or a multi-grade program. This would suite Susanne. She did not want to have the same teaching assignment that she had had this year.

Wayne's Career Transition

Wayne and I first discussed his possible involvement in this research over the telephone. He understood the purpose of the research and the criteria for his possible participation. He immediately volunteered to participate as one of the teacher narrators.

Wayne's entry to the junior high school was different from the other four participants in this research. Wayne had been an assistant principal in an elementary school. He took a leave of absence from his administrative designation at the elementary school. His reasons for leaving the elementary school were:

> I was tired of baby sitting kids. At least that is what it felt like to me. A lot of time I felt that I wanted to deal with kids that were more mature. I also wanted to try teaching different levels. . . . To be honest, I didn't feel as much energy anymore for the elementary. I wanted something that I felt had more teaching and more subject expertise, so I wanted to move to Junior High. I always knew that I would get along with kids that age. I knew that wouldn't be hard for me.

Wayne's Education and Employment Background

Wayne discussed his university education and his rationale for making certain decisions. Elementary school teaching and administration was not his first choice in education. He initially wanted to be a high school teacher but made the choice to take a Bachelor of Education Degree, elementary route out of expediency and opportunity. He noted:

> I actually went into elementary education at university not out of choice, but because I was told that was where the jobs were. I wanted to go into high school Social Studies. There weren't any jobs, so I went into elementary.

Wayne had no difficulty getting a contract with an urban school district. He described his first assignment and opportunities as being

> grade 5/6 in a small school of about 215 students. I had a very supportive principal who got me into a Teacher Effectiveness Program in my first year. . . . the consultant came in every two weeks and observed and gave me feedback on my lessons and gave me pointers on Teacher Effectiveness. That was a very good year.

Wayne received recognition early in his career as an individual who had leadership potential. In his first year of teaching he received a nomination as the outstanding first teacher in the jurisdiction. For two years

his responsibilities were the Grade 5/6 class and then for two years, a Grade 6 class. Wayne discussed his responsibilities and teaching assignment:

> I taught all subjects, enrichment units, orienteering . . . doing everything pretty well, including being the teacher designate. [act as principal if the principal is absent]

Even though Wayne was experiencing a lot of success and enjoying his situation he had sought a transfer. He accepted a job teaching Grade 7 in a junior high school but then was offered an administrative appointment as an assistant principal of an elementary school. He was placed in a large elementary school where:

> I taught Grade 5 for a couple of years, Grade 3 and then Special Education in my last year there. It was a very good year . . . because I extended my repertoire to a few things like learning styles, format for planning a wheel and being exposed to a very large school with 30 teachers and they had a lot of expertise in a lot of different areas.

He gave an explanation for applying for a move to a Junior High as a teacher. He noted that he gave up his designation as assistant principal because:

> I was interested in administration at the Junior High and they [central office] probably would have put me in without any teaching experience. It is my style to be in the trenches and be familiar with it [junior high] and then move into administration.

Finding a New Position

Wayne had made the decision to try to transfer from an elementary school to a secondary school. In making this decision he had also decided to take a leave of absence from his designation as assistant principal. Wayne's first thoughts were not of moving to a junior high; he was initially interested in high school:

> I was actually interested in teaching high school because it was more a specialist type position. I did contact high school principals. There was nothing available. My principal contacted a lot of principals on my behalf.

Wayne described how he ended up in the large junior high where he accepted his current position:

> I had quite a few principals phone me and say that they had jobs and were interested in me applying for them. . . . I had no intention of going

> there [current school] but when I went out there, I was impressed with the attitude of the staff, the enthusiasm of the staff, the fact that it was a technology-based school, the atmosphere of the place, the behavior of the students, and the principal impressed me. I decided that it was a place that I could work in. I decided to go there.

Wayne accepted the position of a Grade 7, core teacher. A core teacher is responsible for providing instruction in the four main subject areas to one group of students. The teacher is usually assigned some optional subject instruction time. Students from a number of classes are mixed together to take that option. His responsibilities included working and planning with a team of teachers. He also accepted some coaching responsibilities.

School Organization

Wayne was hired as a Grade 7, core teacher in the junior high school. He described how he was welcomed by the other teachers. The teaching staff were divided into teams which were supposed to work together, planning and coordinating units of study, developing materials, and assisting one another. Wayne noted:

> We have a system. We have teams of teachers at each grade level. I found that really worked well. Even though there are seven of us on the team, none of us have taught Grade 7 before. But it works well. A lot more delegating duties. I will get used to a group going through a curriculum at the same pace. I found that very helpful because I can get advice from people. I can say, 'I am here in this unit, where are you? Where should I be? How would you approach this particular lesson? I am not sure how to do this or I don't understand this particular concept in science!' That kind of support from colleagues is really helpful. It is helpful to have a lot of people at the same level which is something you rarely get at the elementary school.

Wayne had positive feelings about the above mentioned form of organization. He also noted that there were some disadvantages and pressures placed on the teachers by the team system that he did not experience in the elementary school. Wayne commented about the pressures of having to keep up with the other teachers. The issue of time to get units of study completed and time to get lessons taught was an issue for Wayne. For him:

> The pressures do not come from the other teachers. The pressure comes from wanting to keep up myself. Pressure is too strong a word. Knowing where I should be is helpful to know. . . . I was talking about pacing. I find still that some lessons drag a little longer than they should. I don't get it all in. It is not as big a problem because I teach core so that I have the same kids, so that alleviates some of the problems.

> But on days when we have a gym period or a full year option or a modular option, you really have to whip through it. In math by the time that you have corrected work, talked about a new concept, then most of the work is left for homework. With math you can do that. In L.A. I am finding a problem.

One of the outcomes of the organization was that the teachers informally modified the formal organization to meet their personal and professional needs. The teaching staff was divided into teaching and planning teams. Wayne like the team meetings, but he found that team planning had some disadvantages:

> One of the things that we have found is that planning with seven teachers is difficult. We started to split into pairs and threes. Seven was just too many. There was too much input. It was just too hard to coordinate.

One of the reasons Wayne left his assistant principalship and elementary teaching career was because of the time requirements and the work load that he was experiencing. He added to his teaching responsibilities in junior high by agreeing to coach a boys' volleyball team. The extra time required, pleasurable as it might have been, and the increased marking loads were causing stress for Wayne now that he was teaching at the junior high level. He explained:

> I am coaching the boys' volleyball right now. I am really enjoying it. I find that it takes a lot of time. A couple of practices a week and games. It makes for a long day. You quit teaching at 3:22 and in the gym at 3:30 and out of the gym at a quarter to 5 and then I plan and go home for supper. I makes for a long day. But I enjoy it. . . . The one thing I don't enjoy is the marking load. It is much, much heavier. To the point where I don't know whether I want to do it anymore. I think I am in a transition. I am tired of working every night. I am tired and I don't see anyway to get out of it.

Wayne described his feelings about how the school was organized from year to year. The Grade 7 core teachers were expected to move to Grade 8 core, keeping the same class. The school hoped that achievement of the students would increase since the teachers were already familiar with the students' different strengths and weaknesses. Wayne had clear reasons for not caring for this system of organizing the school. He commented:

> It creates unrealistic demands for teachers. I would never organize a school that way. I just think learning four new curriculums three years in a row is unreasonable. From what I have seen of the school's past achievement results, they are not that good. The whole idea is to

> improve achievement, but I think what you get is lesser quality teaching because the teachers are so tired of learning the curriculum. They are under a lot of stress learning the material year after year and you don't get to recycle materials and you don't get to get it down pat. So ultimately, I think that it hurts student achievement. . . . I think kids need a break just like adults. I think that sometimes a fresh face is good for them. . . . I try to teach to a number of learning styles and yet we all know we favor one learning style so I think that the kids might get a better variety with another teacher.

Wayne was initially impressed by the level of technology available in the school. He was anxious to learn these new systems. He soon found that the technology and its advertised advantages were a little misleading. His school had been selected to pilot a new reporting system. Wayne was critical of how some of these innovations were handled. He commented:

> The reporting system is a complete disaster. The computer system does not work. It is glitzy all over the place. It is completely inefficient. It gave parents inaccurate information. It gave the wrong marks. Other schools found the same thing. I am not impressed with the school board using us to pilot this stuff. I just don't think that - If they are going to use teachers to work out all of these glitches, we should get some sort of compensation. Education doesn't usually work that way.

Wayne enjoyed working with the new staff and the expertise that he found among those individuals. He enjoyed some of the contact that he was having with his students in both formal and less formal situations. He was disappointed in the junior high with the increased marking load that he was experiencing and the apparent failure of the technology that had initially impressed him, to make his work easier.

Wayne and the Students

Wayne had noted that he was beginning to feel like a "baby sitter" in the elementary school. He was finding that there was a different relationship between staff and students in junior high schools. By commenting on some of the things he had found in junior high, he was making a comparison about what was different in terms of relationships in the elementary school. He commented on the relationship between staff and students as having

> less distance between the staff and the students. I find that the staff are more black and white with the students. The teachers are more likely to call a spade a spade and not worry so much about the kid's self-esteem and coating everything in teacher language. They say, "You screwed up or you didn't do your homework." I don't hear elementary teacher talk like that. I am more likely to say that to junior high kids now.

Wayne's first impressions of the students and their behaviors did not hold up as the year progressed. There were aspects of the students that he enjoyed but there were aspects of their behaviors he found disturbing. He noted:

> I was disappointed with the behavior of the kids during nutrition break. It is five minutes in the morning and the afternoon. It is not what I am used to from kids in school. The halls seem wild, noisy, shouting and sometimes running. Grade 8 girls stood out for me. Very strange! They are just weird.

Wayne was experiencing some frustration in dealing with some of the students some of the time. Wayne wants to help the students deal with their difficulties but indicated that the whole process of dealing with the students and their problems was becoming repetitious. He commented:

> I'm sympathetic and listen. We try to talk it out. Sometimes I'm like a broken record. One of the things that I find is that they try to bring in allies all the time. It is very hard to talk to one, all of a sudden there are six standing there. . . . They are into group things. In one gym class one of them asked to go for a drink and before I knew it six of them had disappeared for 15 minutes. They I had to deal with that after school.

Even though Wayne had some complaints about the general behavior of the students in the halls and in less formal settings, he did make some very favorable comments about the students in his own class. Wayne also noted that the methods of dealing with troublesome students was also quite different between the elementary and junior high schools. Wayne described his class:

> I have a really excellent class. A really nice group of kids who are in many ways like elementary kids. They are very excited about learning. They are still very enthusiastic. They are probably not a typical class. I feel quite close to a lot of them. . . . I'll say to them, "You guys are getting on my nerves, leave for awhile, out you go." I wouldn't do that in elementary school. But they are old enough now and know what is expected of them. I'm not going to put up with it. I handle it a little differently. . . . I feel that I can chew out kids if they are not working hard enough. It is a different way of relating to them than with elementary kids.

Wayne had commented that the Teacher Effectiveness training and the experience he had at the elementary level was still beneficial. He felt that even though the children were older and bigger that it "didn't really matter. The same techniques will work and they will respond."

The relationship that Wayne experienced with the students in less formal situations was different. He felt that they and he were more relaxed

and that he enjoyed the less formal contact with the junior high age group of students. He commented that he had enjoyed coaching the boys' volleyball team. This less formal situation promoted a different way for teachers to work with students and for students to respond to teachers. Wayne noted:

> There is this big guy, he's in Grade 9. I have had a couple of run ins with him in the hall before I got to know him. Through volleyball he and I look at each other differently and talk differently. It is completely new because of that. I think the extra curricular activities are so important particularly for those problem kids. They see the other side of a teacher and you see the other side of them.

Even though Wayne was feeling the pressures of time on his personal life he makes the time to get to know and relate to the students. He was also making a distinction between elementary and junior high students and how they appear to think. He made the following comment after his responsibilities to the volleyball team had ended:

> I am spending less time planning. The marking time is about the same. I am not coaching now so I have a bit more time. I spend a lot of time talking to the kids. Elementary kids you just give them a reason and they think it's OK. Junior high kids want to know "why" about everything. I find that a lot of them hang around and talk after school and I talk to them. I find that it is a good time to get to know them at a different level. It is not all business and you can joke around with them. Time wise I find it extremely demanding.

Wayne also noted the difference in the maturity level between elementary and junior high students. The junior high students, Wayne felt, were able to do more with less direct supervision. This heightened level of maturity on the part of his students meant that when he

> gave the kids something to do, I could actually sit down and do something. In the elementary that almost never happened. They always needed you. But with these guys, once you got them going they were OK for awhile. That's nice! I don't find it as physically demanding as in the elementary. It probably is a little more mentally taxing, the work and the sophistication of the curriculum.

One of the most notable differences for Wayne between the elementary school and the junior high school was the way the students were disciplined. Wayne noted that the higher level of maturity meant that the students should have an understanding of their behaviors and the consequences. Wayne seemed to prefer the way discipline was handled by the school at the junior high level. He noted:

> One of the things that I think is different in the junior high is there seems to be a harder line about behavior than with the kids in the elementary school. In the elementary if they misbehave you have to work with them. In junior high if they misbehave they are out of here. I like that. I believe in working with kids to teach them but sometimes you have to think of the bulk of the kids in the room. I like the approach taken by the administrators. . . . I know being an assistant principal in the elementary, I had to discipline a lot of kids. You had to put them in your office while you waited for a parent. In junior high that doesn't happen. They are out the door so fast. I like that.

Wayne's Philosophy

Wayne noted that it was important to remember that students, whether elementary or junior high, were just kids and "kids will do silly things." Wayne felt that it was really important for teachers and administrators to know where students were coming from. It might have caused them to act that way. He was in agreement with the recent changes that had been made to the school system's discipline policy, and commented that he had seen "a lot of outrageous behavior in elementary from a lot of disturbed kids. I saw them do things that I don't think teachers should have to put up with."

Wayne felt that the administrators should be more aware of the demands that were being placed on teachers. He discussed this as it related to the introduction of the new computer systems within the school. He felt that even though the teachers were opposed to the system and found a lot of difficulty with it, the administration were going ahead with the innovation. Wayne related what the teacher across the hall was experiencing. He felt that the school administrators were not as aware of what was going on in classrooms as they should be.

> The teacher across the hall is an outstanding teacher with a very difficult group of kids. She does not want to move up with those kids. [The school is organized so that the teachers move to the next grade with the same group of children right through their junior high experience.] The administration would probably support her not moving with them. I don't think that they are aware of how difficult that class is. Everytime the administrator goes in, the teacher is so outstanding that they are not really aware of how difficult the class is. The administrators claim it is up to the teams. I have seen the party line before and what they say does not always hold true. So we will see!

Wayne refers to his fellow teachers to confirm his thinking about students or about what is happening in the school. He obviously consults with other teachers when he is experiencing difficulties or to confirm his own

impressions. He commented on this in regard to the problems with the computer systems and with his perceptions about a group of students. He commented about how the staff felt about the computer system:

> The staff are split 50 - 50. I'm probably much more adamant about it than others because my particular terminal had more problems than many of the others. I don't know why. It wasn't me! It was the computer. I do know that they had consultants in to look at it. It is very time consuming. Extremely time consuming!

When Wayne was asked about changes that he was noticing in the students, Wayne observed that the greatest change was

> mostly with the girls. It must have something to do with puberty or hormones or something. They are more talkative. They don't seem to be on task as much. They have a harder time completing assignments to a reasonable quality of excellence. The boys have settled down. . . . I have talked to other teachers and they tell me that girls this age are about the hardest to deal with.

Wayne had some difficulty with the integration of special needs students and the philosophy behind the policy. He felt that in some cases the time investment did not pay dividends. Wayne said:

> The bottom line is that some of the regular students that could be pulled up to be better students suffer because of it. . . . We had the consultant in with this one girl. Her receptive vocabulary is somewhere between 7 and 8 years old. I can individualize and talk to her but the majority of the talk that goes on in the room is no where near that low. So sometimes she doesn't have a clue about what is going on. So I look at that and I think that it is just not worth it.

Wayne commented about the difference in discipline practices between elementary and junior high schools. He had a definite line that should not be crossed by students and expressed appreciation for the support of the administration in the school. He listed a number of things that he felt the office should help teachers with. They were defiance, sexual harassment, and vandalism. Things like homework not being completed should he handled by the classroom teacher. He was appreciative of the parental support that he was getting at the junior high and felt that the feedback he was getting from the parents was positive about his expectations.

Wayne's Well-Being During the Transition

Wayne expressed some feelings about his life as a teacher before and during his career transition. He commented:

> Teachers are phenomenal people with great skills. I know that from when I was in administration. I gained a greater respect for teachers than when I was just a teacher. I don't feel that I can be the kind of teacher that I want to be. It is kind of the martyr syndrome. Putting in very long hours and sacrificing my family life and interests. I am doing less work this year but I am less satisfied with what I am doing in the classroom. . . . I am really struggling to find a balance. I know that some people do. But, I know that virtually all of the teachers on my team are struggling to find a balance. . . . For me it is not the money, it is the lifestyle. When I go home in the evening I want to be there. . . . I look at the opportunities in education and I don't like what I see. There is administration or central office. It is the pace. I must be getting old. I suddenly realized how fast I was moving and thought I don't want to live like that anymore.

Wayne's Future Plans

Wayne indicated that even though his current experience was not that stressful for him, he was making some plans about his future in education. He had come to some personal realizations that will affect the decisions he makes about his future. He noted:

> You know a part of me wanted things to be different in junior high. I realize that teachers, no matter where they work, work damn hard. For me it's a life style thing. I have got to the point where I am just tired of it. I guess that I am tired of taking care of everybody else. I want to take care of myself. So I want to get out. I will probably stay next year but I am going to be looking for work. I am not sure what I am going to do. I may go into business. I just feel in my heart that it is time for a change. Rather than be a cynical teacher, I will get out.

Gail's Career Transition

Initially, I met Gail, a teacher in her mid to late 20s, during the Christmas break, 1994. We had a number of phone exchanges and finally settled on the Christmas break as being the easiest for both of us to begin the research project. We met at her school and after a brief tour settled down in the staffroom to begin our conversation.

Gail is the teacher in the study with the fewest years of teaching experience. She has had some excellent experiences and some that challenged her. Making the move to junior high from an elementary school was not entirely her idea but was a challenge that she welcomed.

> The administrator at this school had been encouraging me for some time to make the move. The previous Grade 8 experience left me wondering if I really wanted to do that. Public opinion about junior high is so negative. I have always faced fears head on and I didn't want the bad feeling about that one Grade 8 thing to carry on. I considered myself a very good Grade 6 teacher and I always wanted to prepare them for junior high. I thought if I am preparing them for junior high then I should know what I am preparing them for. . . . I had been working on pretty basic French with 4, 5, and 6 students, and again for my personal growth, I wanted to be challenged a bit. So, I decided to give it a try.

Gail's Education and Employment Background

Gail had always known that she was going to be a teacher. It was a goal that she had worked toward throughout her early educational experiences. She had experienced many teachers whom she had greatly admired. She had nothing negative to say about any of them. She indicated that it always appeared to her that they were doing their best and always encouraged her toward her personal goals. Many of her former teachers still remained part of her life. She noted:

> I guess that I always knew that I was going to be a teacher so that when I reached Grade 12 there wasn't very much choice for me. I knew that it is what I wanted to do for a long time. . . . I feel very lucky because all of my teachers had a very prominent part in my life. I still keep in touch with many of them.

Gail had such a personal relationship with her instructors that she was a little apprehensive about going to the University of Alberta with its large size and number of students. For this reason she elected to attend Concordia College for two years and then to transfer over to the University of Alberta.

She felt that going about her university entrance in this way helped her because

> I really appreciated the Christian atmosphere that was there. It is a Lutheran college and I am Roman Catholic but I really appreciated the Christian atmosphere. I then transferred to the University of Alberta. I felt comfortable at the university because I had already made some friends at Concordia College. I had been an active member of their choir and had met a lot of people and had made a lot of friendships.

Gail had become very interested in the French language and was interested in teaching in that area. She decided to do a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in French. French is her third language. She studied French and made arrangements with a local school jurisdiction to do some substitute teaching in the afternoons while attending classes in the mornings. She commented on how hard this arrangement was but also noted its practical value:

> I packed all of my courses into the mornings so that it would leave my afternoons free for subbing. I was called a lot and was able to sub in French classes. It was the optimal situation because I was able to learn theories in the mornings and apply them in the afternoons. So I was in the best of two worlds at the time. I did graduate with a B.A. with a major in French, a minor in Italian and in E.S.L. instruction.

The local school district gave Gail a short term contract at the end of each university academic year so that she was able to gain additional teaching experience. When she graduated she was offered a teaching contract with the same school district.

For the remainder of the first year, Gail was offered a regular elementary classroom. She turned down that position hoping to get a position where she could use her French training. Fortunately an opportunity came along in a Grade 4 classroom where she would be working with another French teacher. She spent three years in that position and enjoyed the experience very much.

Gail noted that the school was an elementary/junior high school. She had the opportunity to teach some French at the Grade 6 level as well. Gail was also asked to teach one class of Grade 8 French. This proved to be a personally challenging experience and became one of the motivating factors for her move to a junior high school. Gail commented on this initial junior high experience as

> not being a very wonderful experience. The Grade 8 group that I had was hard. The kids saw me as the elementary teacher, teaching Grade 8 French. So they kind of gave me a hard time. I remember not looking forward to Grade 8. That kind of led to this change as well. I did not want to be left with this feeling about Grade 8. . . . So it was very interesting dynamics there. I left there not feeling very good about Grade 8. I knew that I could get over that. I didn't want that to be a stumbling block in my teaching career.

Gail then moved to another elementary school where she had a Grade 4 class and some French instructional time. For Gail, "It was a very positive experience with supportive parents." The haunting thoughts of the previous bad Grade 8 experience and the support of school district administrators was the impetus for Gail deciding to try junior high teaching. She wanted to challenge herself and be able to use her language instruction expertise at a more advanced level.

Finding a New Position

It was noted in the introduction to Gail's story that she had made the decision to try a position teaching French in a large junior high school. Once the decision had been made to move, Gail was still questioning the wisdom of the move and she was receiving messages from others that only created a greater feeling of uncertainty for her. She said:

> It was a very difficult decision to make. My administration really wanted me to stay at the other school and I really liked the staff. . . . I spent the summer wondering whether I was doing the right thing or not. I was an object of pity from people when they asked me what I taught. When I told them junior high French they would say, 'Oh, we are so sorry!" So little comments like that made me a little uneasy. . . . I think back about my education and I look back at my teachers and I think that the ones that I have kept more contact with were my junior high teachers. . . . A lot of teachers told me how difficult the adolescent age was and how unusual they can be. Obviously I was reached by the adults in my life.

Gail had some initial impressions of the junior high school. She felt that she had more to offer her new school than her excellent teaching skills. She had some preliminary conversations with the school's administrators where they advised her that they were concerned with building a sense of community within the school. They felt that this concept was lacking within their current school culture. Gail felt that she could contribute in this area. In her previous elementary schools she had been exposed to a considerable amount of work on reflective thinking for teachers and in developing a

personal teaching philosophy. She felt that she had some weaknesses in other areas. Gail noted:

> This particular school is very, very large. They are very athletic. They are seen by the rest of the school district as not being very involved with the community. I think coming where I came from I should be in a pretty good position to help them with that. . . . I can't help them with the athletics. I am not very athletic but I could offer them strong teaching skills as a way of creating community within the classroom. That seemed to be the direction that the administrators wanted to go. So I began this year with a Grade 7 homeroom, teaching Grade 7 and 8 French.

Gail described the school as being;

> very interesting. It is a dual track French Immersion and English school. I get to work with other teachers from Quebec and Montreal. They are very good with French so it is kind of nice. It is a very big school with over 700 students.

Gail also noted her initial feelings about the atmosphere and culture of the school. They were very different feelings from those she had experienced in the smaller elementary schools she had previously taught in. Gail realised that:

> It is very, very different from my other schools. I am trying very hard not to make judgments. Just thinking that I am learning and concentrating on what I am doing in my class. . . . I felt that it was a somewhat different atmosphere. Coming from my reflective background, it didn't feel very good. A lot of people and a lot of red tape.

Gail also wondered about how the other junior high teachers would react to her and her elementary practices:

> I was wondering about the staff. I was setting up the classroom and I was wondering if it was too elementary or not. What would be acceptable? I kind of took a look in the other classrooms. I believe in creating an environment. Many of the rooms had bulletin boards set up that seemed pretty constant. They didn't look like they change. They were just there. So I was troubled with what I should put up. How often should I change them. In elementary the bulletin boards were a big thing for me. Generally I found that the school was not very colorful. I didn't like that there was not much light in the classroom with all the desks in rows. I used to have trapezoid tables so that you could group differently. Overall the school climate itself was not colorful.

Along with finding a different atmosphere and feeling tone in her new school, Gail was given some responsibilities beyond her classroom that caused her some concern. The school was piloting a "Site Based Management" system

for the school district. Gail was asked to manage the French language budget. This was a new experience for Gail.

Another notable difference for Gail was the feelings that she got from the initial staff meeting and her first meeting with many of the staff members. She felt that they seemed to have a lot more to discuss than they did in the elementary schools as was evidenced by the length of the agenda. She also noted that the tone of the meeting was different from her previous experiences. Gail said:

> Our meeting was very different as well. There was a long agenda and a big handbook. It seemed very business-like. That describes it, very business-like. I heard through the grape vine that some of the teachers were wondering why I had come to junior high. They were aware of my background. . . . I felt that they were wondering why I was making the move. I think they were wondering if I would be overwhelmed by the situation. They tended to treat me like an experienced teacher.

School Organization

Gail did receive some help from one of the administrators in the school. The school was organized so that one administrator was assigned to a grade level. She noted that there was very little cooperation and sharing among the teachers. This was not a practice that the school had adopted. Gail missed this aspect of her work. She saw herself as a cooperative planner and believed strongly in the team concept. She commented:

> The grade administrator took care of all those things to make sure I got what I needed. I was given the curriculum guides before the end of the previous school term. But I did find that even though we did get together, each teacher offers their own program. There didn't seem to be a lot of sharing between the grade levels or between the teachers that taught the same thing. They were working in different places on different units. That is fine. We all have our strengths. . . . [In the previous elementary school] we shared ideas and what we were doing at a particular time. We shared the resources too. We discussed what we were going to be doing in the classroom. I miss the cooperative planning. I am a good team player, so I miss some of that.

Gail indicated that the school staff were discussing some new directions. They wanted to move in the direction of cooperative planning, to move toward a more child-centered culture, and continuity of instruction by having the students spend more time with one teacher. Gail noted that the school staff had some good ideas that she liked but "they don't have a vision of what they want yet."

The school is organized on a dual track system. Some of the students are in a French Immersion track and a large number of students are in an English program taking Extended French. This organization made the differences in the students very apparent to Gail. She found that generally speaking, the French Immersion students were higher academically than the English students. She believed that many of the English students were taking French as an option because their parents saw them as being university bound and therefore insisted that their children take French. She said:

> Actually the French Immersion students are very high academically. Very, very high academically. There is a big difference between my French students and the Grade 7 French Immersion students. Work habits and study habits are different. I would say that generally this school has the reputation of high academics along with an excellent sports program. So it tends to attract students who want a challenge. I find a big difference between the French Immersion students and the students taking French as an option. The French Immersion students' parents are very, very involved.

One of the problems for Gail was report cards. In elementary school, Gail was very used to writing long descriptive comments about how each child in the class was doing. In junior high, Gail found that the report cards were computerized with a coded list of comments that could be put on the reports beside each subject area studied by a student. Gail was looking forward to getting away from the arduous task of writing the elementary school style report cards. Yet, she felt that the junior high reports were not adequate and she wrote a descriptive paragraph about each child so that the parents would be provided with more information about their child's progress. She noted:

> I find that the report cards are a problem. I put hand written comments on the report cards, every single one. I felt I needed to do that. Each teacher had given them computerized comments, but I wrote a paragraph on how I saw the kid doing. I hated the [computerized] comments. I would go all out. Part of me said the report cards will be easier now that they are on the computer. Arriving at the marks but picking from the comment list is not easy at all. . . . It was interesting because when I came to junior high I was looking forward to getting away from all the written reports. I felt that the comments don't give a picture so I ended up writing a paragraph on each. So I guess that I will never get away from it.

Gail found that teaching more students and not having sufficient time to really get to know her students was very frustrating. She noted that after a few months with elementary students she would know them quite well and felt confident reporting to their parents about the progress of each individual

child. The junior high was organized differently with the students moving from teacher to teacher for different subjects throughout the day. Depending on the schedule she may not see some students on some days. Gail felt that this organization was not a good way to facilitate the teachers getting to know their students. She noted:

> I find it frustrating. I understand that the report card that they received in Grade 6 was much more detailed. It gave a much clearer picture of how the child is doing. I am frustrated this year because I don't feel that I know my students well. I don't see them that much and I am sorry I don't know them very well. It is frustrating to have to put a mark on their report cards. . . . Computerized report cards don't say what I want to say. They say somewhat what I want to say, but not entirely. That is really difficult. . . . We had 20 minutes to do an interview for each student. That is not long enough. They want to hear more about what is happening. They want the whole picture.

Gail noted that it had been difficult to form friendships among her fellow teachers. She said that she had formed a bond with a few first year teachers on staff. They were working as hard as she was. The first year teachers were concerned about being given contracts so that they would have jobs the following year. They would often go in and work on weekends. Gail and a couple of these teachers would set a day when they would meet and go for lunch and then return to the school to do some after hours work. She felt that the first year teachers looked to her for advice as none of them had been assigned a mentor to advise them or help them make the adjustment to professional teaching. Gail was also feeling the isolation from the other teachers. She had come from environments where planning, sharing, and helping among fellow teachers was the norm. This new experience lacked that component for Gail.

Gail and the Students

As mentioned above, Gail was frustrated by not being able to get to know her students. For Gail it was important to be able to know and react on a personal level with her students. She had found that this was not possible when she had taught the Grade 8 class a few years earlier. Those students were "just plain mean," they would call her names and do everything that they could to be disruptive in her classes. At the end of the year her car had been egged by one of the Grade 8 students.

Gail had mentioned that her favorite teachers with whom she had maintained contact were mostly her junior high teachers. She felt that she wanted to be that kind of teacher and have that kind of rapport with her students. She found that this was not easy because of the way the school was organized and the limited amount of teacher contact in the junior high school. Gail gave her impressions of some of the students in general terms. She noted:

> I knew what I had to do. I went over how we have to treat each other in the classroom. The Grade 7s were very nice. They were very uncomfortable. More uncomfortable than me in the beginning. The Grade 8s were something else. There is major apathy. We could offer them the world and they still wouldn't do anything. There is something wrong with Grade 8 students. I don't know what it is. Something funny about Grade 8 students. . . . I don't know what to do to get through to them. That is kind of my challenge. They are so different, the dynamics, I don't know. The Grade 8s are the group that I don't look forward to seeing.

The Grade 8 students that Gail taught didn't have to take her class. The French course is an option which means in junior high it is not given the same weight as the other academic areas. Most students choose the options that they want to take. Gail had the impression from her Grade 8 students that most of them were there because their parents were insistent on them taking the course. Gail described these students as being "apathetic" about the content of her classes.

Gail has had some difficulty with some of her students. She does not feel that any of the problems that she has had were too extreme. For many of the problems that Gail described, she linked them to the overall apathy of the students. She told a story about two of her male students who she said were "at risk":

> I have had problems with two boys in my class that I consider to be at risk. They are hanging around with older kids. They are doing nothing academically. They just don't care. It is hard to help a student who doesn't care. I don't know how to get through to them. You can keep them in for detention. Fine, who cares. I don't know. I feel that one of the boys could be reached. I phone the parents. I talked about the kids that he was hanging around with. I said that you understand we can't say who they can have for friends. Somehow we have to encourage him to make some other choices. Unfortunately, she shared the information with him. That started the boys passing notes. I had to talk to them about that. Alone each of them was not bad but together the combination doesn't help each other.

Gail commented that the incident that troubled her most was when one of her students who was very upset because she had pointed out that assignments were not being completed and who had a poor test score, yelled that he hated French. Gail expressed frustration at an attitude that she felt was prevalent among the students:

> Instead of taking ownership of the problem he decided to hate the whole class. . . . The junior high kids get very mean when they attack. They attack the way you look physically or your car, or your work. You have to remember not to take it personally. That is their way of hitting out. I have heard at university that junior high students will go for the jugular vein. So I am aware that they can be that way. I want respect, first and foremost. I also want to be liked. It seems to work better for me. I say that the only people who get bored are born bored. If you are bored then you are not making an effort to be happy. You are what you are and you do what you can do.

Gail's Philosophy

Much of Gail's philosophy has already been addressed in her story. Gail was a teacher who liked students and liked to be liked by them. She felt that she could be more productive in that type of work environment. Gail said that she liked to create an environment in her classroom that was bright with a cooperative tone, where the students were allowed to share but where respect for the individual was important.

Gail enjoyed a challenge which was one of the reasons that she made the move to the junior high school. She also felt that it was important for the parents of the students to be given lots of information about how the student was doing in her classes at school. Gail thought that the computerized reporting system being used in her junior high was not adequately addressing the parents' need to be informed. She noted:

> As an elementary teacher we learn not to compare one student to another student. Now the teachers are saying this is your kid right here and this is the class average right here. They use these beautiful bar graphs. I don't feel comfortable comparing one student to the rest of the class. I don't mind talking about the kid's marks. But the bar graph is such a visual thing. If you want to shake up a kid that is fine. Some kids will never reach way up there. For some kids reaching half way is absolutely fine. It seems that we are teaching programs not kids.

Gail was a teacher who had been trained to be reflective about her practices and she strove to work harder for her students. She was a firm

believer in cooperative work and sharing among teachers and saw this as an important component in any school that wanted to develop a sense of community. She felt frustrated that this component was lacking in the junior high school. She declared:

> New teachers have the BEST program that is offered by the school district. They are taking part in that. I think that new teachers to a school need more support within the school. It is nice to have somebody that you can go to in the school. They should be given a kind of a partner. Somebody that will kind of show them the ropes and help them with the program. I would like to suggest that for next year.

Gail further described some of the initiatives that she believed were going to be undertaken in the school. Nothing was happening. When asked why the school administration was not making any gains in these areas, Gail replied:

> The administration and the school is in tune about cooperative planning and preparation. It depends, you have to make it a priority and then you plan for it. You have to make the time for it. You have to support it somewhat. You can't just say that you would like them to be involved in cooperative planning. You have to offer them some help. You have to facilitate that. And so, with the timetable being so complicated, it was October before it settled down, so I don't think we will see cooperative planning. I don't think that they see it as being important.

Gail's Well-Being During the Transition

During our discussions Gail and I covered some of the main points that seemed to be bothering her about the transition to the junior high school from an elementary school. Gail was making a good adjustment to junior high and was generally happy with how things were going for her. She was working hard in her classroom and planned on continuing to work hard to satisfy herself and her students.

She felt that she had the support of the school administration in her dealing with students and parents. The administrator that was supervising her grade saw to it that she had the resources that she needed to do her teaching. The administrator helped her with her coordination of the French language budget. She was happy to be in an environment where she could use higher level French skills with the other French teachers in the school. She was not happy with the lack of collegial planning that she had experienced and enjoyed in her previous elementary schools. She felt that she was somewhat

isolated in her classroom and with the things that she was doing. It was noted earlier that the friends that she had made on staff were first year teachers. Gail said:

> There are a couple of new teachers on this staff that are very much into sharing and offering support. We are all being evaluated this year so, because I am experienced I am saying, "Don't worry. It will be okay." I have been able to establish a real good connection with the younger teachers. We work on weekends a lot. It is kind of nice to have someone who will be working late, so we set once a week where we go out and eat and then come back to work. We kind of help each other that way.

Experienced junior high teachers were not appointed nor did they come forward to be her mentor in the new situation. She felt that this type of assistance would be useful because she felt "isolated."

Gail continued to use some of the ways that she was familar with in the elementary school. These practices did not conform to those of the junior high teachers. She went about creating an environment in her classroom for herself and her students. She believed in decorating the walls with current work and not leaving the same board decorations up for most of the year. Gail had some difficulties with the reporting system and had returned to the elementary practice of writing extensive comments on the report cards. She did these extra things wondering how they were being perceived by the junior high teachers on staff.

Gail's Future Plans

Gail planned on staying in the junior high position that she now has for a least two more years. She then planned to move on. She didn't know where yet. She knew that she has faced many new challenges in the past year and that many more challenges lie ahead. She noted that she did not have a family at the present time that made demands on her time but that the situation might change in the near future.

Robert's Career Transition

Robert and I met one winter evening after school hours. He had kindly volunteered to participate in this research but with some reservations. He wasn't sure, after reading the description of the research proposal, whether he met the criterion of a person who had been teaching elementary school and then moved to a junior high school.

I discussed his concerns with him on the phone and told him that his background was of interest to this research and that his story sounded very interesting. He had left an elementary school and had just made the move to a junior high school. He felt that because of his previous career transitions and the length of his teaching experiences, that will be described below, he still wasn't sure he fitted the profile. I reassured him that he was a good possible participant in the research and that he had the option of withdrawing after our initial meeting and conversation.

Robert's entry to a junior high school was different from the other four teacher narrators collaborating in this research. The previous June, Robert had been declared surplus at the elementary school where he had been teaching for two years. Robert discussed being declared surplus by noting:

> It didn't bother me. I mean, from my viewpoint, it was handled fairly. I knew that I only had five years in the system and I knew that if I couldn't be here [the previous school] they would put me somewhere else.
>
> I was declared surplus and I was down a bit. I didn't stay down very long. I feel that I have enough personal resources that I can do other things. My resume indicates that I can adapt to new situations.

Robert has had a varied and interesting career with many transitions. Robert's story was interesting because of the moves that he had experienced and his attitude towards them. Robert hoped that this would be his last career transition before he retired.

As indicated earlier, it is important when investigating the experience of transition, to note the past, the present and projections about the future for each of the teacher narrators. It is Robert's history and his projections about the future that appear to have had a direct impact on Robert's recent career transition experience.

It is very evident from Robert's narrative how his experiences and philosophy of career transitions has influenced his personal and professional life.

Robert's Education and Employment Background

Robert received his formal university education in the Maritime provinces. After he graduated he decided to experience the Canadian North.

He was offered a position in Inuvik where he would be testing students and helping to set up special education programs to meet their unique needs. This position lasted only two or three months. He explained his next move.

> I was then transferred to another osolated school. This move was a real eye opener. I taught Grade 3 with 18 students. Six of the students had active TB, many of them had impetigo, head lice, hepatitis, and there was a lot of dependency on solvents and drugs. The children experienced a lot of physical and sexual abuse. It was an incredible experience to live in that community.

Robert stayed there from 1972 to 1975. From there Robert moved to another isolated school. He described this experience as being completely different from the previous transitions. While the previous setting was dominated by abuse, neglect and indifference to education, his next move was to a company town. Robert noted that the level of involvement of the company in the school was both a blessing and a curse. He explained:

> They were very generous in many ways. Anything I wanted for the school and could not get through the regular budget process, the community would get it. They were very supportive financially, but the educational values had to reflect those of the south. They were going to be up there for a year or two, make oodles of money and then return south.

Robert noted that often conflict situations would arise because the school served the white students of the company families as well as some native students. Robert described how he would

> quite often get into difficulty because I had to defend the native child who was attending my school. I had to look after their educational needs and sometimes that ran into contradiction to what the whites wanted.

From there he went to another northern school. This proved to be a very happy career transition for Robert. He noted:

> A lot of history there. I think it is the second oldest community in Alberta. It was a good experience working for those folks. Once again it is very isolated. Alcoholism is the number one problem, but a lot of good folks though. I loved them. Just tremendous folks.

Robert enjoyed this experience but for personal reasons decided to leave the north and head south. He explained:

> Our children were getting to an age where they were in junior high or progressing toward high school. We thought that the educational opportunities were not there. We wanted to broaden their horizons so we moved south. We moved to a rural town in central Alberta. . . . I got along famously with those folks. . . . The Ukrainian children have a very strong work ethic that they get from their parents and the parents support what you try to do in the school.

Robert then decided that he wanted to move into the city, again for personal reasons. The large city would provide more opportunities for his children and the city would better meet his wife's professional needs. He made this move in a calculated way. He adopted a strategy to get placed on full time teaching staff in Edmonton. He explained how he went about this task:

> I supply taught one year with an urban district. I concentrated my efforts on three schools. I did it purposefully and I designed it. I figured that if I wanted to get into this system, I would have to do it because there is a lot of competition. Any day that I was not called to supply teach, I went to any one of those three schools and said, 'I am here as a volunteer.' It helps to get your foot in the door. I got on.

Robert received a contract with the school district. His first assignment was at an inner city school where he taught a Div. 1, 2, and 3 Behavior Disordered Classroom. He did that for a couple of years and then decided to make a move to another school that was in a more affluent area of the city. At this school he taught an elementary Behavior Disordered Class and a Grade 6 class. He stated:

> I did the BD for two years. Then I took a modified Grade 6 program. . . . I felt that I had to get a break from an inner city school because it was very emotionally demanding.

> The new school was a nice break but it still was challenging. I had a BD and an Adaptation kid and 2 Opportunity students. The parents insisted that they go to their local school. So I had to try to fit the curriculum to meet their needs. Then of course, the cut backs.

It was at this point that Robert was declared surplus at his school and had to make another move.

Finding a New Position

Robert, as previously discussed, was a little down after being declared surplus. He had developed a very philosophical view of what had happened to him and what was about to happen. He resisted the temptation to grab the first

position that was being offered by the school system. Robert described the process. He noted:

> I was offered a BD position on the south side of the city. It was working with another teacher. I thought that her personality and my personality would not get along very well. Her philosophy of education is quite different from mine. I thought not. I was offered another position and I declined that. I just thought no. I'll just sit on the fence and something will come along. Then I was asked if I would consider this position. I decided to pursue it. I accepted the position after they accepted me.

Robert had concerns that were also of a personal nature when deciding on the position that he would take. He wanted to be close to home. He also wanted to have the issue settled before the summer holidays started. He noted:

> My biggest concern was that I live up in the [area of the city]. I really didn't want to go [across the city]. If I had to, I was prepared to do it. I didn't want to do it because we had committed to entertaining one of our grandsons for four weeks over the summer and my sister was coming from Nova Scotia. . . . We planned a 7 or 8 thousand km. trip to take her around and show her the west. I didn't want moving to interfere with that.

Robert accepted his current position for a couple of reasons. First, the school was close to his home and second, the special education class he was being offered allowed him a degree of independence. He explained his first impressions of the school.

> I came the last day of school. I came and moved all my stuff. I came in, on and off for 2 or 3 hours at a time over the summer to set things up. . . . I met with the principal here and was invited to a staff meeting. I attended.

Robert has had considerable experience making career transitions. He was happy to have been placed in a school that was only minutes away from his home. He was not very concerned that it was not an elementary school. He had preliminary discussions with the principal and had been introduced to some of the teachers the previous Spring. Robert taught in a detached portable classroom. This physical situation seemed to suit his style. He was accustomed to being in isolated situations and doing what he thought was in the best interest of his students. He did note:

> We have over 400 students and there are I.E.P.'s on about 25% of them. We have a lot of high special needs students. The teachers made me feel welcome but I am in a portable and you know that you sometimes miss

> some of the communication that occurs in the staffroom. I do miss out on that.

Robert was concerned with making contact with his prospective students. Throughout our conversations he was constantly referring to a particular child with a particular type of problem. This attitude was reflected in his actions. He noted that before the end of June, 1994

> [he] contacted some of the kids that were going to be here. I introduced myself over the phone and said that I was looking forward to seeing them when they registered in the Fall.

Robert knew what his teaching responsibilities were. He would be teaching a Special Education class. This did not bother Robert. He felt that a teacher takes students as they find them, with all of their strengths, weaknesses and baggage from their personal backgrounds. Many of his attitudes had been formulated from his experiences in Northern Canada and native schools. He comments on his current teaching assignment were:

> I have all of the junior high Opportunity Students. I teach them everything except Library and Industrial Arts. Another person does that. I do everything else.

School Organization

The school where Robert was located is a large elementary/junior high school. As previously indicated there were about 400 students with many special needs students in special programs or integrated into regular classrooms.

Robert teaches a junior high Opportunity Room program located in a portable classroom unit about 40 meters from the main building, neatly tucked in at the back of the school by the teachers' parking lot.

Robert noted that even though he did not have a great deal of contact with the other teachers on a regular basis, he has found them cooperative when he needs their help. He has made the effort to have some of his students integrated into regular classes when he felt that they have the necessary skills to deal with the situation. He commented:

> I have one student who is very well coordinated and he is integrated into the regular Phys. Ed. program. I have four or five other students that are very interested in dance so they will be integrated for that only. A lot of other things they don't have the skills. I have spoken to

> the people concerned and they have said that there would be no problem.

Robert's main focus in the school are the kids in his class and the program that he offers them. He is concerned with the development of self image among his students and their ability to relate to each other. He places very little importance on the curriculum and sees it only as a tool. Robert focuses on those things that he sees as being of the greatest benefit to his students. He noted:

> They [the students] have to love themselves. I took the Lions Quest Program which was marvelous. I use the Assist Program. There are times when there is very little curriculum. There was very little curriculum when I did the Behavior Disordered. I was just working on them. . . .

Robert has definite feelings about curriculum and innovations within education organizations. His actions and beliefs are governed by what he sees as being a higher purpose than covering a certain amount of material in a certain amount of time. His actions are governed by his own notions of what is really important and by what he perceives as being essential or non-essential for his students' personal growth. His feelings were expressed when he noted:

> To say that one curriculum is better than another is nonsense. I have been subject to, "our curriculum is more holy than yours. Our way of doing things is better than yours." Some school jurisdictions have a bit of an ego trip about this stuff. . . . I'll show you something. I showed this to another teacher just the other day. I couldn't believe it. This book was published in 1953. So it is 41 years old. It is called, The Child as a Citizen in a Democratic Society. . . . If you go through this you will find indicators, outcomes, and expectations. I get kind of annoyed when I hear some people who think they have a monopoly on something that has been around for 40 years. This is not something new.

Robert and His Students

Robert sees the relationship between himself and his students as being very important, not only for their well being in the school setting but his as well. He noted:

> They have to get along, one with the other because their individual behavior affects others around them and me. It affects me in that I can feel good or I can feel down or it also affects me in that it affects my reaction to you. But these are the things that you will have to do in the way of behavior modification if you want others to accept you.

Robert has had a history of caring very deeply for his students and as he phrased it "putting yourself on the line." When he was working in other situations in northern communities he discussed some of the types of things that he had done to help individual students deal with immediate problems. This philosophy he maintains is essential if the type of the child that he teaches is going to develop the level of trust with school systems for them to grow individually and academically. He reported about something that he had to do in the past. He noted:

> The kid had a major problem at home. I took the kid home, even if I was on the reserve in the northern communities. I took the kid home. I did not consult with the parent. I covered my backside and let my administrator know, social worker know if need be. If I was on the reserve with the RCMP I would tell them that this kid has been whipped and I am not allowing the child to go home until something is done or until the alcohol spree is over. So I keep the kids. I have done that. It is kind of risky. . . . It is kind of risky when you have children who have impetigo or head lice, but we did it anyways. We are better for it. You have to have something there that is tangible for these kids. And I hug. There is not one of these kids that will refuse a hug from me. Not one.

Robert appeared to be very aware of the type of student that he was working with and their individual problems and concerns. He commented:

> These children are very much in need of emotional support. They are all low functioning but not low to the point where they are not aware of how the world sees them. They feel that they are different. It concerns them. Some know that they are different intellectually. They don't grasp knowledge as quickly as their peers. Some are aware that they have trouble with fine motor control. They are very much aware of it.

Robert felt that it was not only important to be aware of the intellectual abilities of his students but also to be aware of what they really wanted. He talked at great length about the writing and development of Individual Education Plans for each of the students. He noted that unless they have some meaning for the children, then they have very little value. He felt that the I.E.P.'s should include some of the students' wants and desires. The could include what the students sees as important in their lives at the present time not some curriculum notion of where they should be or some psychological assessment's indication of how much growth each student should achieve. Robert went to some length in talking about a boy who really wanted to know how to get a date but had difficulty because of a severe stutter. Another boy he mentioned who wanted to know how he could become a professional wrestler. He talked about another boy who had very bad teeth and was emotionally upset

because he was unable to find and keep friends. Robert noted that "somebody might take me to task and say, what the hell is this, how do I get a date. But that was his." Robert is prepared to defend those kinds of decisions.

Robert really stresses the importance of developing a family concept within his class. Robert feels so strongly about the importance of this extended family relationship that he provided his students with his at home phone number in case he was ever needed by the student. He recognized that all families have disagreements. He noted:

> Some of these kids will fight with each other. Don't let anybody outside of the portable say anything against any of these kids, they are all right there. . . . Some of these kids have visible handicaps. They are aware of it. It's amazing in here that when they get in a conflict with each other they never throw up the other's handicap. It is always something else, you know, but not the handicap.

Robert's Well-Being During the Transition

Robert said he was happy in his new position in the junior high school. He was finding it challenging and requiring a lot of personal involvement with his students. As indicated earlier, he did not mind working in partial isolation from the rest of the school and staff. It was something that he was very used to after years of moving around the rural areas of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Robert noted:

> The secret is adaptability. I don't try to get the kids to fit into the curriculum you have got to take what is in the curriculum and adjust it to the needs of the children and if you do that no matter where you go, no matter what the cultural group, you will get along. The parents will sense that you are working for their child. Then you will have the support. I firmly believe that. Sometimes I don't get hung up with a lot of curriculum things.

Robert felt good about his role as a teacher and the part he played in children's lives. He noted:

> We're lucky as teachers, we have the one constant, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Northwest Territories, reserves, inner city, there is one constant, all children need to feel love. They need to feel important and they need to feel that people care for them. The curriculum is nothing more than a vehicle to help us fulfill some of these goals and needs.

Robert's Future Plans

Robert is nearing the end of his career in public education. Throughout his career he has made many varied career transitions. He has consistently placed the concerns of those around him first, whether it was the children he taught or his own family. When he was in the north, Robert and his wife adopted two native boys to join his family of two children. His family is practically grown so he gave an indication of what he hopes his future will be. He said:

> The longest that I have ever stayed with any jurisdiction is five years. I have made the commitment that I will stay until I retire in another six years. It is the hope of my wife and myself to go to a Third World Country and do some teaching.

June's Career Transition

I met June in the Spring of 1993. June was approached and kindly volunteered to participate in the Pilot Study. She later agreed to be included in the final research document as it added valuable insight to the research and was deemed appropriate. June and I held our discussion after school hours in her classroom at her current junior high school.

June's story adds information to the stories of the other four teacher narrators and gives insight into what she experienced as a result of making the transition from an elementary school to a junior high school. The transition that June made was in the 1992 - 1993 school term. The discussions that were held with June helped to guide the subsequent discussions with the other teacher narrators.

June's Education and Employment Background

June's initial thoughts were not of entering the Education faculty. She applied and was accepted in the Commerce faculty. She had to overcome other barriers before embarking on her university career. She noted the reaction of her family to this decision in this way:

> They didn't encourage me in any way shape or form. I went to my father and spoke to him about it. He said that he had heard about student loans. It wasn't that they threw me out in the cold, but, they never offered any encouragement. They never thought I should aspire to that. Neither of my parents have grade 12.

June felt that some of the family feelings were based on gender, as she later noted:

> Well it's sort of funny because when my brother graduated my Dad wanted him to go to school. I think Dad finally realized that you needed more than a grade 12 education. The only thing was my brother couldn't do it. He couldn't handle the structure and the routines for studying. So I thought, I love my brother dearly but it was kind of tongue-in-cheek for me.

June's initial selection of the Commerce faculty was in part due to family influence. She felt that the study of business would be more acceptable to her father. She said:

> I didn't come from a family where university is part of the tradition. My going to university was not looked upon favorably by anybody in my family. I originally went to university in Business Management. My father thought that might be alright. I went into that

> and realized quite quickly that it was just one math course after another. It is my weakest area. I knew that this was not what I wanted to do. I headed for Education because I knew that in my heart that is what I wanted to go for.

June graduated from the University of Alberta in 1988 with a Bachelor of Education degree. She was hired by one of the local school systems a few days after the school year had started. Even though she was trained to teach Grades 4 - 6, she was assigned a Grade 1/2 class. Initially she felt a little lost. June described her contact with her colleagues and their resulting collaboration in the following way;

> It started with them coming to me. I had two wonderful teachers sharing their resources and ideas. The day I was hired, they went out to lunch with me and bought a whole bunch of posters to put up in the room. By the time the kids had come back from lunch they had put the posters up in the classroom. They were so helpful. They offered this binder and that material and this is what I'm doing today. I kind of weaned off that and I knew that at anytime I could go and borrow their materials. We had a lot of great group meetings where we shared lesson plans and resources.

June said the following of the teachers who had helped her:

> I had some really good mentors. They said they (the children) will learn to read in spite of you. In spite of whatever you do. You immerse them in language, poetry and stories and they will learn to read. And they do!

This assistance and mutual sharing continued as June taught the Grade 1/2s for three years. The three years were challenging, productive, and rewarding.

> Coming from university it is hard for any teacher to know what the children can manage. . . . Like they didn't even know what side of the book to open to copy, let alone where on the page to copy or between the lines. They had no idea. So there was a lot that I had to teach them. For everything that I came up with I had to take ten steps back. I really learned how to break tasks down into manageable parts to where learning begins, where to start, where anybody can start.

June wanted to try something else. In her fourth year of teaching she taught a Grade 6 class. She had a difficult time establishing the same level of rapport that she had found so easy to establish with the "little people" in the early grades. They presented her with challenges and did not accept her solely on the basis that she was their teacher. June said the following of the experience.

> It was probably the toughest transition. I was very nervous. With the little guys, you felt, well I'm the adult. When I moved to Grade 6, I was so unsure of myself and these kids were so big. But in the end it was a very good experience.

At the end of the year an advertisement was placed in the staff bulletin for a junior high science and girls' physical education teacher. June reflected over her past schooling and her university training.

Finding a New Position

She had often thought about being a physical education teacher when she was in high school and reflected back on how much she had enjoyed the program. June initially wanted to be a high school physical education teacher, but as she noted:

> The possibility of getting a job was next to nil so I took the second best route. I went to Division II education knowing that I would be better as a generalist than teaching the same subject day in and day out.

When the opportunity came for her to apply for a position at the junior high level teaching girls' physical education she decided that this might be the chance to find a teaching position that she had desired for a long time. She applied for the advertised position and was accepted.

The school accommodated about 450 students with about 180 requiring special needs attention. The junior high had a professional teaching staff of 22 teachers. June entered into the new career experience with a feeling of reserved confidence. She noted:

> It was a little scary. I didn't find it as overwhelming as going from grade 1/2 to grade 6. I had a lot more confidence, I suppose, because I had made the transition in the elementary school and I managed quite successfully. So I had a lot of confidence coming in.

It was June's habit to go into the school in August to get her class decorated and lessons prepared for the opening of school. She was surprised to discover that she was the only teacher to come early. In the elementary school other teachers came in early so that there were other teachers to plan and talk with in the process of getting a mind set for the beginning of school. She discovered that the teaching assignment had been changed. She recalled her conversation with the principal about the assignment of teaching responsibilities:

> When I came for my interview it was to be science and physical education. They thought I would have art and I would be doing resource help, which was basically sitting in other people's classrooms. That was my understanding. I knew there was going to be some little side ends.

She found that she had been assigned some Grade 8 and 9 social studies, study skills, and girls' physical education. These changes didn't bother June much as she set about preparing for the start of school and her new experience.

The rest of the teachers showed up for the first day of staff meetings and preparation time. June noted that the staff was very friendly, joking and kidding with each other and made her feel welcome. Some of the other teachers offered her materials for use in the social studies classes. June gratefully accepted these offers and felt free to ask for materials and supplies throughout the year. June noted:

> I found the lady that had taught social studies last year and she gave me her books and her own binder and others came in and dropped off materials. I ended up with more than I could get through. The school has been pretty helpful and no one in the school would refuse you any materials that they had.

Materials were freely given to June by other teachers. A mentor to help June adjust to her new situation was not assigned and one did not emerge from the staff. She said, "I am finding out how really lucky I was (in elementary) and I guess you have to find that out." June further noted:

> I mean here you are with a binder and you have never taught it before. You still have to muddle through but at least you have something to go from. . . . Anyway, I felt a little bit disgruntled about it. Although, when you come from elementary you teach everything anyway, so I figured I could do that.

June noted that she missed much of the professional collaboration experienced in the elementary school. She felt "somewhat lonely. A lot lonelier than I ever felt before. I don't even like to go in the staffroom."

As the tensions of the new experience increased, June withdrew more from the other teachers on staff.

> I find that the type of talk that goes on is not the type of talk that I want to be involved in. You get tired of it. Maybe it's like that for the other teachers when I wanted to talk to them.

School Organization

June's first day was dizzying hustle and bustle. She discovered that her Monday timetable consisted of six different groups that she met in six locations throughout the school. She learned to hate Mondays. It meant that she was seeing close to 180 students with very few students in more than one of the classes. She said:

> I started that I don't want to go to school. It's the Sunday night blues. I hadn't had that in a long time. I had it in my first year. I was going through some personal things in my life at that time. I hadn't had those Sunday night blues since then. I spent the last two and a half years in elementary happy to be getting up and going to work. I'm not a morning person by any stretch of the imagination, but I didn't used to get this feeling.

June felt deeply that this constant movement of people not only caused problems for the teachers but also for the students.

> I think it just helps to distract them. The fact that they are changing classrooms means that they don't have any sense of belonging. They don't sense that this is my classroom, this is my teacher and I'm going to look after them. I liked that rapport in elementary. You treat them right and they would look out for you and these kids in junior high don't have that.

June noted that getting to know the students by name was extremely difficult. She was very uncomfortable filling out the interim reports of the students in the fall. Interim report cards are not official and are meant to give parents some information about their child's progress. June noted:

> We had to do a beginning report card. I didn't even know if this kid was in my class. You know I had to really check against the list. I didn't know anything about the child. I was really making a guess.

She lived with apprehension while doing the reports. She thought she might mistake one student for another and that it would cause problems. The complexity of the teaching demands was further compounded by the school accommodating many special needs students. About one third of the school population required some special attention.

She noted one incident where this became a very real problem for her:

> I went for an interview with a parent. I missed the child's IEP, (Individual Education Plan). I felt just awful. I had to sit and rationalize it. I had a list of all the kids who had IEP's. I didn't know any of them. I'd never seen their names before in my life. I'm going through the book trying to find them only to discover that they might

be out of order or that someone has taken it out. So it gets missed. That's sad!

This was unlikely to happen in elementary school where individual classroom teachers are required to keep a record of all the special needs students. In the junior high school the record was kept in a big binder in the staffroom at the end of the hall. June made the point that such records should be working documents for classroom teachers, but the size and structure of the junior high made it impossible to handle such documentation any other way. This was a source of frustration for June as she pointed out:

> The IEP's are on one sheet of paper. There is math, social studies, language arts and science all on one sheet of paper and it's kept in a nice tiny little book in the staffroom. Well isn't that dandy. . . . For it to be a working document it has to be in my hands, for me to write notes on when the situation presents itself. I'm not going to remember. When I go down the hallway, I have thirteen interruptions. . . . That's not a working document. You go through the book and somebody has taken out so and so's. You're just asking for things not to get done in that kind of situation.

June felt that she had brought many skills that she had acquired in the elementary school with her to the junior high. She felt that elementary teachers were accustomed to developing an educational plan to deal with an individual student that was having difficulties with school life. There were support mechanisms in the elementary school that were designed to help teachers meet individual student needs.

Adjustments had to be made when deciding what it was that students could handle or in the case of junior high students wanted to handle. She made a comparison between elementary students whom she felt, even with their initial inability at some tasks, were much more capable, or apparently capable of working independently than the junior high students.

> I'm just appalled at the fact that I could work with Grades 1 and 2, and you know how needy they are, I could get them to work on a task and have half an hour here and half an hour there to work with an individual child. In (junior high) you have to monitor all the time. And so rarely do I ever get to sit down with a child and help them. If I happen to have an aide in the classroom then I can get them to help them. One on one for me is still limited. The moment I do that the whole room erupts.

A constant source of frustration for her was the way the school was organized. The school offered a Grade 7 core program, a Grade 8 semi core program, while the Grade 9s went to specialist teachers. The instructional

assignment for June was primarily with the Grade 9s. The difficulty with this organization was highlighted when June discussed trying to help students with their individual problems.

> It takes a lot longer to pin point (particular problems). You don't have the time to help them out. When you are in a core situation you're able to rob time from social studies to focus on language arts. Or you're able to combine social studies and language arts. I believe that with the core situation you are much more able to deal with a child. He might be a good math student so he's done in fifteen minutes. I can help him with his language arts. Here they are stuck in math class for the whole fifty minutes. . . . I would like to see statistics. I'll bet there is not a whole big difference between the kids that had core or semi core or the other. They are all fumbling around!

June further commented on the organization for instruction as it affected the Grade 9s in particular.

> In Grade 9 the theory is that they are getting them ready for high school. But I really think that in Grade 9 they need more bonding. They are really reaching out and trying different things. You see them wanting to tell you things but time doesn't allow for it because you have to teach your social studies in fifty minutes and you can't stand still for that.

She felt that the organization of the school timetable resulted in wasted time for the students and only

> provides them with ample opportunity to make locker stops so they can be late for classes. To make eighteen dozen locker stops and to have thirty million conversations only takes away from their focus on school. We are not here for social parties. We are here to learn. I'm paying good money for them to be here to learn and I don't even have any kids. We are just providing them with ample opportunity to goof off because every fifty minutes they get a break and they move to another classroom. These kids are abusing it like crazy.

As with small children, she found that it was necessary to break tasks up into small steps so that the junior high students could complete them. She felt that in many cases, grade 1/2 students learn in spite of the efforts of the teacher while any learning that takes place in the junior high was often done resisting the efforts of the teacher. June noted:

> They make it really hard. They don't want the help, sometimes especially for tests. There is this one boy that I have in the Grade 8 social studies class. He is very low. I haven't done a diagnostic reading test. I don't have the time. I don't know what his reading level is. How in the world am I going to find out? . . . I go to pull them out to get help with an aide and he doesn't want to go. Even taking him out of the

> room where the other kids can't see him he doesn't want to go. You can't make people do things they don't want to do.

June expressed ambiguous feelings about teaching physical education. She commented that she had become very disenchanted with the junior high girls' participation in physical education. She tried to gain their participation using various strategies. She noted the difference in getting Grade 6 students to participate and getting junior high girls to participate in the program.

> You don't get to form the bond with the students. They are so hard to motivate. I had kids in my Grade 6 class, except one or two, they would participate in anything. . . . I reached so many kids and got them involved in so many activities that they normally wouldn't do. They would push themselves to such limits because I knew that they were good in other areas. I think that is what I am missing. I can't give these kids a love of phys. ed. when they won't participate. They refuse. They won't even give me a chance. . . . I have tried threatening them, I tried to sweet talk them, nothing works, I tried ignoring them and I have them do seat work assignments while the rest of us are participating. It doesn't make any difference. And even the ones that do it, do so haphazardly. There is no real effort. They are just there!

Only a small percentage of the girls want to participate in the program. Most of the others are even reluctant spectators. She tried various strategies to get the girls to participate in the program. None of these showed the benefits that she wanted. The aspect of the junior high program that she most looked forward to became one of the biggest disappointments for June.

Continuity with a group of students was important for June. She rapidly came to the conclusion that she like being a generalist teacher and longed for the days of returning to that structure. June stated that she

> could become bored really easily and I don't like teaching the same subject over and over again. I like teaching different things. I found out that I like to have a group of kids and building rapport with the group is the biggest reward for me.

June and the Students

June said that in the elementary school she was able to greet the children in the morning, she was able to set the tone for the day, she was able to find out who was having a good day, determine who was having a bad day, who was upset, and who came to school unprepared for learning. All of these things were done in the first few minutes of the day and set the stage for the day's tasks. She found that she was not able to do this. Each class was a new beginning of a new day. Every fifty minutes the whole process has to be

redone. June felt that this demanded too much of her time and too much of her energy and too much time away from the tasks that had to be completed in class.

June also felt that the move to junior high was not as trying as the move that she made from Grade 1/2 to Grade 6. However, she learned that the type of move the she made to the junior high carried with it a new set of problems and dilemmas. June felt that it was difficult to establish any type of relationship with the students and this remained a problem throughout the year. June noted that the inability to establish rapport was in part due to the organization of the school and the stage that the students were at in their lives. She said rapport with junior high students was

> a lot harder to develop. They just won't let you in at all. My Grade 6s were kind of laid back. In the beginning they didn't want to get to know you too much. After a month we were all quite close and I knew them all quite well. When I came here they didn't want to let you in at all. Still there is a large percentage that won't. . . . It lasted so much longer than it does in the elementary school. I blame it on the fact that you see them fifty minutes a day, five periods a week, and that's not everyday. I see them four days a week because I get a double period with them. It's not enough to build rapport.

The whole question of students testing teachers was a problem. The testing never ended in junior high. In elementary the children would find the limits of the teacher's tolerance very quickly and learn to live and function within those limits. She noted a strong difference between the behaviors of elementary and junior high students. She noted the following about student behaviors.

> I think mainly it's the language that they thought they could get away with. The amount of disrespect that they thought they could get away with. They just push the rules that you have set in your classroom just to see if you are going to follow-up on it. That sort of thing. . . . I am starting to understand more now. Junior high kids are going to do that. Now that I expect that it is going to happen it's not quite so bad. You know being told to F-off or being called so many nasty names right to your face. So in the beginning you take it personally. Later on you start to sort it out. So it wasn't just curriculum change, school change, it was a total change in routine. Just the other day in this art class I was abused. I was mentally abused in this class by some kids. I had enough. I took them calmly to the office and said these kids are not welcome in my room until they give me a formal apology. They have abused me. They have been disrespectful and I will not tolerate it anymore. . . . Either I get a formal apology or they are gone for the rest of the year. I will not be abused like that!

June further noted that there seemed to be a lack of consistent expectations or consequences for student misbehaviors. She thought that:

> there should be, like we had in elementary, six or seven little behaviors. Disrespect, opposition to authority, abusive language, there were five or six things. And if you did this once this happened, second time this happened, third offense you were suspended.

As mentioned earlier, June noted that in the elementary school when there were children with problems she could plan her time so that she could rob some time from one area of the program for that child and help them in another area. Part of the problem at the junior high level was the reluctance of the students to accept help from a teacher. Junior high students didn't like to be singled out by teachers for any reason. Associated with this problem was the lack of independent work skills by the junior high students. June felt that the Grade 1/2 students were much more able to work by themselves for half an hour freeing the teacher to work with a student. The junior high students didn't allow the teacher the opportunity to spend time with individual students. June noted that if she did that the rest of the room erupted. June felt that because that was a problem she was becoming frustrated. The students made it really hard. She found it impossible to diagnose what the problems were much less do anything to correct any perceived problems. Even when they tried to pull students out to work with another individual, away from the prying eyes and scorn of the other students, the student needing the help would not go. "You can't make these kids do what they don't want to do." she noted. The question of student compliance with what teachers perceived to be in that student's best interest was a problem. She noted:

> It just angers me. Why do they have the right to interfere with thirty other people's education? No! That is not a right of yours. You can keep saying it and keep saying it. I say, "Go sit outside the room." I found that there are certain kinds of kids you can leave in the classroom. Other kids if you have them in the classroom the same behavior will continue. I just skip that process with them and they go right out the door.

In general, however June felt that the majority of the students were well-behaved. She did made the following more general statement about the students and their behaviors:

> Overall, my feelings about these kids is that generally they are all good kids. They have little understanding of how structure works and how a classroom should be managed. They should respect other people and

> follow directions. They don't have to do that at home. . . . The majority are pretty good all the way around or they are pretty bad all the way around. There are a few kids that I relate to well but they don't in other classes. They don't like this art option and yet they have to be in there so they are just going to give you a hard time.

In discussing the behavior problems, June thought that there was fairly good support from the school administration. But again there were problems of communication. Students would be sent to the office for some discipline measures to be taken and the teacher would not be advised about what action was taken. June noted that the administrators in the school were extremely busy and with a staff and school that size it was difficult for them to communicate everything all of the time. There didn't appear to be any established mechanisms within the school for how discipline problems should be dealt with. Teachers individually set their own standards about what was acceptable and what was not acceptable. This led to some difficulty because the students had to work within the different standards of teachers who were teaching across the hall from each other. June felt that there needed to be a total staff effort in this area. There needed to be a thorough plan that established discipline standards and punishments. She felt that it was necessary that all staff follow the prescribed discipline plan because, as she put it, "the moment one staff member does not follow it then there is a weak link. They can get away with it with one teacher so they try it in your class." This was an area where she felt the school administrators and staff needed to make some changes.

June had high expectations of the students in her class. She expected that the students would listen and participate in the activities that she assigned them. She expected that the students would be quiet and respectful while they were with her in her classroom. June noted that there is a difference in some of the students. Many of the students complied with her wishes by "going with the flow rather than trying to buck the system." There were some students who continued to buck the system all the way along. June felt that these disruptive students interfered with what had to be learned in the classroom by the students.

Most of the discipline problems in the school were handled over the intercom. The teacher would buzz the office and the student would be sent down to be dealt with by an administrator. Very little was put on paper. She noted that you had to be tough, firm, and consistent with the students. June

expected that junior high students should be more capable of independent work than they demonstrated. She said:

> I thought coming from Grade 6 to Grade 9 that they would have so much more of this mastered. The Grade 6s were far ahead of my Grade 9s in organization. These kids wanted me (to do it for them). In the beginning I was saying "Think." I was so angry. "Think for yourself for a minute." I remember I said that a lot. Think before you come and ask me.

June saw part of the problem as being lack of trust between the students and herself. She noted:

> I think it's a relationship with your students and the trust that they have in you that allows them to take risks. That's a difference between elementary and here. The kids don't feel safe with you and they are not willing to trust me. . . . There's no give and take.

She further noted that:

> these kids just take and they will slap you in the face. I find that really hard. They don't know that you are a real person. They don't have the concept that you are a real person and you don't have the time to be a real person. You only have time to be a teacher.

June's Philosophy

Many of June's beliefs about teaching and the purpose of schooling have been disclosed earlier in this narrative. There are some aspects that need to be highlighted to add to the picture of June's transition from the elementary school to junior high school. By October, June had decided that she did not belong in the junior high and wanted to seek a way back into an elementary classroom. Her frustration at not feeling like a teacher but a manager of behaviors resulted in a longing to return to an elementary classroom. She said:

> I enjoy kids. I found that by coming here this year that I am more cut out for the elementary than the junior high. I feel that I spend 90% of my time managing behaviors while I would rather spend 90% of my time teaching, if possible.

Her frustration was evident when June noted:

> It is scary. But nobody should live this way when I see that there is a way to fix that. If we have weak links of teachers and the kids act out in their classrooms, these kids will act that way in your classroom. You have to calm them down. The next day it's the same again.

June had very strong feelings and expectations about how students should behave in classrooms. Many of her beliefs about junior high students and their misbehaviors and lack of respect for the authority of the teacher were related to the lack of rapport and trust discussed earlier. Adding to the complexity of adult-adolescent relationships was the perceived lack of consistency of expectations that existed within the school. She was not critical of the other teachers' beliefs about classroom management but was certain that there had to be some degree of common standards on which all teachers could agree. She said of her own classroom management style that:

> I run a pretty strict show. They have a tough time with me because what I say I mean. If I say that you will be quiet during this period, you will be quiet or you will pay the consequences. I follow up on it. It takes a lot of energy but it is just the way I am. It has to be that way. Otherwise things just don't run. . . . Yes, you have to be tough. If the other teachers here would stick together like the kids stick together, we have to use our strength, and we do have the authority . . . and once you let them know that we are not going to give in it will stop. There is 10% that won't ever listen to anybody.

June commented that many of her beliefs about how children should behave were rooted in her own upbringing:

> I believe that you should respect your elders. You just don't talk back. I find that the lip that I get here is unbelievable for me and is unacceptable for me. I know that it is a phase that they are going through. They test the waters. It is not for me. I can't tolerate it and survive!

June does not place all of the blame for the unproductive climate that she sees in the junior high on students just wanting to misbehave. June recognized that there was probably more to it than just rebellion on the part of students. She said:

> I am not sure whether it is the environment or if it's hormones at this time. I don't know the answer. I think a little blame probably goes to teachers. They like to keep them busy and keep them out of their hair. They know that the students can get off-task really easy and get chatty when they work in groups and so they limit creative work. I definitely believe that it happens. But on the other hand their hormones are out of whack and so their behavior is a result of that and they don't have the energies for this kind of learning. The curriculum has very little meaning for these kids.

June recognized that in order to survive she had to balance some things in her life. She was learning about many students, learning new ways of managing her classroom, preparing lessons, and learning new curriculum

while maintaining a balance in her personal life. She noted how difficult it was.

> That was really tough. Particularly for the first six months. I had to know all that new curriculum in depth. The Grade 9 curriculum in a lot of depth, the Grade 8 I had done a similar unit in Grade 6 on Canadian Geography, so that was O.K. I found that if I could kind of balance with something that I knew something about and something that I didn't know something about, I could trade off my energy.

June felt that the administrators of the school needed to support any decisions that were made by the teachers. She felt that she was lucky to have a school administrator who fully supported teachers' efforts. While there were some apparent communication problems between teachers and the administrators, June noted:

> You've got to back up your teachers. I feel that our administration does do that. I kind of have faith in them that they are handling the problems. I know that if nothing else they give the kids a good bawling out. But maybe we can do more.

June noticed that the parents did not seem to be involved in the education of their junior high aged children. The parents of the elementary students that she had taught were very involved. She felt that parental involvement was important for the education of her students.

> I really found a difference in parental involvement. But again, who am I to say? Is that just junior high? The parent not being involved with this age of student or is it the area? I don't know. But which ever is the case, I am sorry that I don't have it. Support from the home is so important. I can keep the kids here all day but if the parents don't back me up at home, the students are not going to do their homework, they are not going to do what is necessary to get by. I am sorry about that.

June's Well-Being During the Transition

June started the year feeling that she finally had the opportunity to do something that she had always wanted to do. She ended the year wishing that she was able to return to an elementary school classroom. As the year progressed and more things happened that were in conflict with her belief system she began to question whether she was a good teacher and no one reinforced that she was. The students didn't give her the type of feedback that she required, the parents were not involved, the other teachers operated fairly independently of each other, and the school administrators appeared to have been supportive but not present.

> I start to think, am I a good teacher? Nobody came to my room to find out what I was doing. . . . As a teacher you either have the skills to learn this stuff and teach it or you don't. Some things are a bit hard.

As the year progressed June started to reflect on her experiences and what they meant to her. She noted:

> After sorting through the year, I came away with the feeling that it wasn't all me. This is something that somebody coming from elementary would experience. But this wasn't my fault. I enjoy a different atmosphere, I enjoy different children and I feel OK about that now. Although in the beginning I felt that it was me, all me. Your job is a fairly important part of your life.

As the year progressed June experienced problems that were related to her physical well being. She attributed these problems directly to what she was experiencing with her work.

> I was frustrated. There were not enough hours in the day. I was going to bed exhausted. I was having tension headaches, just feeling kind of grouchy. . . . I have had anxiety attacks and lost part of my hearing some days. I was tuning out.

June noted that as the year progressed she began to realize that she was changing and that she had to do something to ensure her survival as a teacher. She had started by taking a considerable amount of work home in the evenings and on weekends. As the year progressed she realized that she was starting to burn out because of the work load.

> I was fatigued. Even though I had moved to Grade 6 and it was my first year, I did very little homework on the weekends. Quite often it was report cards that had to be ready for the next day. This year I worked at least two hours every night for at least the first four months. Finally, about a month ago I decided that when I leave here I am not taking anything home. I have been doing some things that I enjoy. I enjoy learning the Russian history and the Canadian history. I'll be tempted to read it and make some notes just because I enjoy it. . . . I have done enough for them, so I haven't done homework since May.

June did finish the year with a feeling of inner strength. She had gained a different confidence in her ability as a teacher. She said:

> I can say that now I feel that I can teach anything. Anybody and anything! When I talk to a bunch of teachers from my old elementary school and they talk about how tough the Grade 6s were, I just laugh. I can't help it. They may be tough but boy they are a piece of cake compared to these Grade 9s. That was my feeling inside. I didn't quite voice it like that to them. But my worst Grade 6s don't even come close.

June's Future Plans

June will be spending another year in junior high school. She had looked for a suitable elementary school placement but was not fortunate enough to have found one. She said:

> I am a little bit scared about being left here. . . . Someone mentioned it in the staffroom. They said that I would be lucky to get back. I am starting to get real panicky about that, being left in junior high school, because I won't make it.

June felt very fortunate to be with a principal that understood her dilemmas as a result of her transfer from an elementary school to a junior high. She felt that he was being as supportive as possible and was making some adjustments in her teaching assignment to address some of the frustrations that June had experienced. She was given a new teaching assignment in the Grade 7 core program.

> He comes from an elementary so he understands. He understands about the abusive language, the difference in the atmosphere, and he said that he respected that. He doesn't want me to leave. I think he was quite genuine about wanting me to stay. He said that if he gave me a Grade 7 core, which would be much more similar to my elementary, would that keep me happy. I felt that he wanted me to say. . . . So, OK, I'll try this Grade 7 core. It might suit me until a position in Grades 3 to 6 comes along.

June already was starting to have a different experience with her new assignment.

> I am on a different team now. . . . There is more of an elementary type of feeling. They are core teachers. They are more there for the kids than their subjects. I am meeting some different people in the last few weeks and they have been helpful. I am starting to see a little bit differently and in that way next year will be different. But, the atmosphere in the junior high is such that . . . I just do not care for that age group.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided stories of the professional experiences of the five teacher narrators, Susanne, Wayne, Gail, Robert and June. All experienced dislocation as a result of their transfers from elementary schools to junior high schools. Only Robert, the special education teacher with a history of working in isolation from his colleagues, felt that he had sufficient resources to be a competent and successful teacher in junior high school.

In the next chapter, categories which formed patterns in the teachers' stories are discussed. Then the themes which emerged the teachers stories are explored.

Chapter 4
DESCRIPTION OF THE FINDINGS

The previous chapter provided the stories of the teacher narrators' transfers from elementary schools to junior high schools. Each of the teacher narrators provided a considerable amount of information through their conversations about their experiences. Following the development of each narrator's story, the transcripts of the discussions were re-read intensively and categories identified. These categories were sorted and repositioned in three larger units.

It is the purpose of this chapter to describe these categories as they relate to three main phases of the teacher narrators' transitions. These three main phases are: (a) thoughts about their elementary experiences, (b) initial thoughts and feelings as they made the transition to a junior high school, and (c) thoughts and feelings about their junior high experiences. The themes that emerged from the teacher narrators' stories are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Discussion of the Data

The Elementary Teaching Experience

Four of the five teachers participating in this study had voluntarily made the decision to leave elementary school teaching and they actively pursued positions in junior high schools. June, Susanne, Wayne and Gail all actively tried to relocate themselves in junior high schools. These four individuals all saw themselves as being better suited to teaching at the more specialized level because of personal qualities, talents, or knowledge. They came to this realization either from experiences in elementary schools or from a personal feeling that they could offer more to secondary students.

Wayne and June had decided to train and teach in elementary schools because of increased employment opportunities when they graduated from university.

> Wayne: I actually went into elementary education at university not out of choice but because I was told that it was where the jobs were. I wanted to go into high school social studies. But there weren't any jobs. So, I went into elementary.

> June: I originally went to university in Business Management. . . . I went into that and I quickly realized that it was just one math course after another. It was my weakest area and I disliked it the most and I

> knew that this was not what I wanted to do. . . . So I took my first year and I headed for education. I knew that in my heart that is what I wanted to go for. The possibility of getting a job as a physical education teacher was next to nil so I took the second best route for me. I went there knowing that I would be better as a generalist in elementary than teaching the same subject day in and day out.

Susanne had trained as a secondary teacher but had, through various moves, found herself teaching in an elementary school. She was teaching French in a junior high school that was cutting back because of declining enrollments. She felt that she had to have full time employment so made the move to an elementary school and remained there for a number of years.

> Susanne: The position was at a small junior high where they only had two classes of 2 - 7s, 2 - 8s and 2 - 9s. It happened to be a bumper crop of Grade 9s so my position was going to be cut to .5 FTE. At that point my principal asked around to colleagues and found a full time position in an elementary school. So that is where I went the following year.

Gail did not take a direct course into elementary education. She had always thought that she wanted to be a teacher. When she started her post-secondary education she decided to change the main focus of her studies for a short period of time.

> Gail: I started the B.Ed. in elementary as a generalist with a minor in computer applications. One of the courses that I had taken at Concordia College was French. It was so lovely, so inspiring and I had a background in Italian. . . . French came so easy to me so I thought, I am not sure that I want to teach everything. So I decided that I didn't want to go into education right away. I went to them and said basically that I wanted to pursue a B.A. with a major in French and a minor in Italian.

Gail had fond memories of her junior high experiences and teachers.

> Gail: I guess that I always knew that I was going to be a teacher. So when I reached Grade 12 there wasn't very much choice for me. I knew that it is what I wanted to be for a long time.

She had faced a particular challenge when she was asked to teach a single Grade 8 French class in her previous elementary school. The difficulty of this situation challenged her to try junior high full time.

Robert saw himself as a teacher and it didn't seem to matter to him at what level he taught. He had received his teacher training in eastern Canada and because of experiences had found his place as a special education teacher. He was the one teacher who was forced to make a career move by being declared surplus at his elementary school and really had no preference for elementary or junior high when obtaining his new position. He was more

concerned with the location of the school than the level that he would be teaching. He made the decision about his new school on that basis.

The five teacher narrators had varied and interesting experiences while teaching in elementary schools. Generally, they did not have negative feelings about the time that they had spent in elementary classrooms. Susanne discussed her dislike of the elementary curriculum. She felt that elementary students lacked a mature intellect that prevented them from discussing topics in depth. They did mention some aspects of the elementary school culture that they did not like and other aspects that they seem to miss after the move to junior high.

Elementary teaching was for three of the five teacher narrators a second or even third choice of teaching level. Robert seemed to feel it was important to be a teacher where he was needed. Gail had her choice when leaving university of where she wanted to go but decided to teach at the elementary level.

Robert felt that being a teacher was one of the most important professions. Moving was a way of life with Robert. He noted that, "the longest that I have every stayed with any jurisdiction is five years." Robert related many interesting stories about his movements from community to community around the northern parts of Canada and the various positions that he held.

His first teaching assignment in Edmonton was an elementary behavior disordered class in a school near the city center.

> Robert: I did the behavior disordered for two years. Then I took a modified Grade 6 program. After that I felt that I had to get a break from an inner city school because it was very emotionally demanding.

Robert then moved to another elementary school where he taught a regular class for a couple of years and then moved back into a special education classroom. It was at this point that he was declared surplus to the school because of his lack of seniority on the staff and had to seek another position.

Susanne noted a different set of attitudes about the elementary experience. She found that the collegial atmosphere of the elementary school was enjoyable.

> Susanne: The other thing that I really like about the social contact (with staff) was that if you were really upset about a child or a situation you could talk about it.

There were some things about elementary school teaching that were not to her liking. Susanne did not feel challenged by the situations and so found little opportunity for personal growth.

> Susanne: I know that deep inside, the elementary I don't find it as challenging. It does not offer the opportunities for growth. The kids of that age there is only a certain level of teaching that you can do. After all, 11 and 12 year olds, you can't expect a lot of them. . . . I thought I would enjoy the older children more. They are more independent. I am not really crazy about playing the mother hen role. I think the junior highs are more independent.

Susanne felt that the elementary children were much more manageable. They would respond to threats of detentions to get work completed and as a teacher she was able to convince the students more easily that they needed to learn certain material.

> Susanne: The kids aren't at that independent stage. . . . I don't see as much apathy. Maybe the kids managed to hide it better. . . . Generally you can pretty well convince them that they had better do the work or suffer the consequences or whatever. I saw the kids were interested. . . . If they didn't get the work done, they would stay and get the work done, and they did.

Wayne expressed some similar feelings about his elementary experiences. He also noted that he was tired of feeling like a "baby sitter." He found that the junior high staff have a very different relationship with their students. The elementary curriculum did not personally challenge him and the expectations of the students of him as their teacher were different. He found the work in the elementary school more "physically demanding" than that in the junior high.

> Wayne: In the elementary, if they misbehave, you have to work with them. . . . Elementary kids you just give them a reason and then it's OK. . . . In the elementary they always needed you.

Wayne also received a great deal of recognition for his efforts while teaching in elementary schools. He was selected for "teacher effectiveness training", he was nominated for an Evelyn Parr Award as an outstanding first year teacher and was promoted to assistant principal after a relatively short period of time. Wayne was not always satisfied with the relationship that teachers had to have with their elementary students.

Gail also had a very rewarding elementary teaching experience. Schools tried to get her to join their staffs when she graduated from

university. She found the teaching in elementary schools very rewarding and felt comfortable with her students. She particularly enjoyed the working relationships that she had with other staff members. The collegial relationships that she established in her elementary experience were one of the things that she missed when she transferred to junior high.

June also found that the cooperation and the collegial planning in the elementary school was important and beneficial. Both June and Gail said that the teachers seemed very willing to share and offer ideas to newcomers and that they continued to share and plan together. In both their cases, they have maintained personal friendship ties to staff members from their former elementary schools.

> Gail: We all have and use our strengths. In the schools in (one area of the city) cooperative planning was very important to us. We shared ideas and what we were doing at the time. We shared resources too. We discussed what we were going to do in the classrooms. . . . The school where I was at I found it worked very well with the other people. We did some cooperative planning last year. It was done on our own time. We had celebrations and other school functions that we had to work on.

June noted that one of the most important aspects of elementary teaching for her was the setting of the feeling tone for the day's work in the classroom.

> June: You would come in the morning and greet your kids. You would find out who was having a bad day, who was having a good day, who needed a little push and who you needed to back off today. Your day was set. You went in and you taught. Certainly you had to deal with some behavior problems throughout the day, but, normally you got it set within the first half an hour to an hour of the class and your day moved on.

Four of the five teacher narrators expressed some reservations about their elementary experiences. One of the main concerns for Wayne, Gail, and Susanne was that the elementary curriculum did not personally challenge them as individuals. June had an area of interest and specialization that was not being used in her elementary school teaching. These became the reasons for seeking their career transitions. When talking about their elementary teaching experiences they tended to focus on those aspects that they missed the most after they made the transition to junior high school. The main focus of their comments focused on teacher/student relationships and on the relationships that they established with other staff members.

The Move From Elementary to Junior High Schools

The initial reactions of the five teacher narrators to the move to junior high were varied. Four of the five teachers had wanted to make the move. Gail, Wayne, June and Susanne all felt that they either wanted to face the new personal challenges of junior high or felt that they had expertise in a subject area that was not being fully utilized at the elementary school level. Wayne and Susanne did not care to work with elementary students because they did not like to feel like "baby sitters."

Robert was making the transition for reasons other than his dissatisfaction with teaching elementary school or his desire to offer more in the area of expertise. He made the decision to move to junior high strictly on the basis of convenience. Robert had a long history of career transitions.

> Robert: My biggest concern was that I live up in the _____ area. I really didn't want to go to _____ . I didn't want to make that move because we had committed to entertaining one of our grandsons for four weeks over the summer and then after that my sister was coming from Nova Scotia. She had never been out west before and we planned a seven or eight thousand km trip to take her around and show her the west. I didn't want moving schools to interfere with that.

Robert discussed how he finally made the decision to go to his current school. He did have concerns over location. He was not as concerned with what he would be teaching. He noted that when making any kind of transition, the most important thing is "adaptability." When a teacher is declared surplus from a position the local school jurisdiction assists them in locating a new position.

> Robert: What happened was, I was offered a BD position on the South Side. I felt, it was working with another teacher. I thought that her personality and my personality would not get along very well. Her philosophy of education is quite different from mine. I thought, no. I'll just sit on the fence and something will come along. I was asked if I would consider _____(school name). I decided to pursue it and yes I accepted the position after they accepted me.

Robert then moved his personal belongings to the new school and spent a few hours during the summer setting up his new classroom. He had made the transition to the junior high school. He visited with the school administrators, worked with other teachers to meet the needs of his students but didn't socialize with them.

Obtaining positions in junior high schools was not as easy for the other four teachers. They had all decided to make their career transitions on their

own initiative. The problem for them was finding a position where they felt their talents could be more fully utilized and where their personal desires and perceptions about teaching and student-teacher relationships could be fulfilled.

> Wayne: I was interested in administration at the junior high level. They probably would have put me in without any teaching experience but my style is, I like to be in the trenches and be familiar with it and then do it.

> Gail: I thought about it, (the transition) again they made the offer. I thought about it. I would like to and I would also like to get my French up a level. I had been working on pretty basic French with Grades 4, 5 and 6 students. Again it was for my personal growth.

> June: I moved for what I thought was my chance. I always wanted to teach Physical Education. I was given the opportunity to do that here. I thought way, way back when I was in high school, that's what I wanted to become, a phys. ed. teacher. Well this was my opportunity and so I took it. I got to try something that I always wanted to do.

Susanne's reasons for making the transition to junior high school were slightly different from the other three. Susanne had expressed feelings of frustration and stress during her teaching career. She had previously been a teacher in junior high schools. She had left those positions to teach in elementary schools. She experienced stress in both of these positions. Susanne had very strong feelings that her talents were not being utilized and that she did not care for the atmosphere in the elementary schools.

> Susanne: I'll take a job anywhere to get out. At that time getting into a junior high was really difficult. There was not a lot of movement. I went back to the elementary. I decided that I had enough of elementary and decided to take a sabbatical and get my B.Sc. and move onto junior high school again.

Finding the New Position in a Junior High School

The five teachers were all successful at obtaining junior high positions in the year that they wanted them. Robert was given help from the school jurisdiction while the other four teachers found their positions through personal contacts.

As explained earlier, Robert would have taken an elementary position again if one could have been provided in an area of the city that suited him and where he felt that he would have been able to relate to the other teaching

staff. When teachers are declared surplus to their current teaching assignment, the local school jurisdiction helps that individual find another suitable position. The surplus teachers are placed before any voluntary transfers are allowed. Robert therefore had the advantage of being able to select a position without having to compete with the general teaching population trying to make a career move.

Wayne was actually interested in moving to a high school. There was nothing available. His current elementary school principal made some initial contacts for him. He noted that a number of principals expressed interest in him joining their staffs. He investigated some of the schools and made his decision using criteria based on perceived school atmosphere, possible rapport with staff and administration, observed student behavior and technology.

> Wayne: My principal contacted a lot of principals. I had quite a few principals phone me and say that they had jobs and were interested in me applying for them. I went to (name of school). I had no intention of going there. I went out there and I was impressed with the attitude of the staff, the enthusiasm of the staff and the fact that it was a technology-based school. The atmosphere of the place, the behavior of the students and the principal. I decided that it was a place that I could work in, so I decided to go there.

Gail was very anxious to be able to use her second language skills at a higher level. She noted that it was still a difficult decision to make because she liked where she was and she was appreciated by her current administration. Gail was interested in facing a new challenge where she had once perceived herself to have failed, teaching junior high French.

> Gail: The administrator at this school had been encouraging me for some time to make the move. The previous Grade 8 experience left me wondering if I really wanted to do that. It was a very difficult decision to make. My administrators really wanted me to stay at the other school and I really liked the other staff. But I thought at this point in my life, I don't have a family and that this would be the time to take on a challenge in my career. So, I decided. I spent the summer wondering whether I am doing the right thing or not. I was an object of pity by people when they asked me, "What do you teach?" I teach in junior high, Grade 7, 8, and 9 French. "Oh, we are so sorry." So little comments like that made me a little uneasy.

June and Gail's stories are similar in that they both wanted to move to the junior high so that they could teach a subject that appealed to them at a higher level. June wanted to teach physical education at the junior high level. She found an advertised junior high school position in a Staff Bulletin

that appeared to meet her needs. The principal of this particular school was also a former administrator of an elementary school where June's husband had taught. She felt that she had some preparation for the transition to a junior high school because of the moves that she had made in the elementary school from teaching Grade 1 to teaching Grade 6. She went through an interview process in the junior high school and was offered a position.

> June: When I came for my interview it was for a science and Physical Education position. They thought I would have art and I would be doing resource help which was basically sitting in on other classrooms. That was my understanding of how it exists here. So I knew that there was going to be some little side ends. Sometimes I found it a little scary. I didn't find it as overwhelming as going from Grade 1/2 to 6. I had a lot more confidence. I suppose because I had made such a transition from the 1 to the 6. I managed OK, quite successfully. So I had a lot of confidence coming into it.

Susanne also wanted to be able to use what she perceived as more advanced skills in teaching science. She did not like the relationships that were necessary with students at the elementary level. Susanne was well aware that teaching at the junior high level was very challenging. She had taught at the junior high level before she had gone back to university to further her studies. She selected the school that she went to primarily based on the reputation of the principal. Susanne had submitted her request for transfer through the voluntary transfer system that had been established to facilitate the movement of teachers within the school jurisdiction. She noted that there were not that many choices. It appeared to have been a year when there wasn't a great deal of movement of the teaching staff in this particular school jurisdiction. Susanne was also reluctant to leave a school and staff where relationships had been established.

> Susanne: Well I was apprehensive about the next school. I didn't know what was going to happen. The staff were really quite close, socially, etc. I felt really comfortable there. In fact sometimes, too comfortable. So I was afraid of the unknown, and yet I was glad to leave because I was ready for a change. I think that six years is far too long even though it was a very good six years.
> I had two choices of junior highs. I could have waited but I was in the I don't know what it was called, the voluntary transfers, the first round. There were not that many choices. I mean there were more offers but they were not of interest. I basically had two choices. The principal convinced me that it was a good school and that I would be happy there. I was interested in the technology part because when you don't know a lot about it you're curious. And I thought well here's my chance

because I had shied away from computers from the very beginning. For some reason I am not crazy about machines.
What attracted me to this school was the principal, it is a beautiful school, just wonderful and quiet. We don't have bells. Our kids don't change classes. They have one break in the morning because the mornings are four periods and the afternoons are two.

Initial Feelings About Junior High

The five teacher narrators had different reactions when they started in their new teaching positions in junior high schools. The teachers had heard that teaching in junior high schools was a difficult assignment. They had made a choice about where they wanted to be whether it was to face new teaching challenges, to make use of expertise in a particular curriculum area, or whether their choice was based more on convenience.

Robert had made his selection of schools based on the convenience of the school to his home. He would have taken another elementary position if one could have been found that was within a reasonable distance from his home. Robert had faced many transitions in his teaching career and the move to the junior high was just another move that needed to be made. He went into the school ahead of time and set up his class in preparation for the new year. He contacted his students by phone and introduced himself as their new classroom teacher for the fall. He was not too concerned with making contacts with the staff or the administration. He knew that he would be working in isolation from the others most of the time and that isolation did not seem to bother him.

Susanne had spent time in her new school during the previous spring. This gave her the chance to know the students, the staff, and the administration with whom she would be working. She felt quite comfortable coming to the school in the fall at the start of the new term.

Wayne, who was coming from an assistant principalship in elementary school, was very impressed with the physical plant and the amount of technology that was available in his new school. He found that the staff were open to his arrival at the new school and appeared to go out of their way to be of assistance to him.

Wayne: I have never felt more welcome anywhere that I have worked. The staff all went out of their way to say hello. Some of them said things like I taught this science unit last year. I will copy it and put it in your mailbox. The people were offering to help.

One of the first things that Wayne noticed was the different way that staff related to the students. In the elementary school, Wayne had felt that he was often a "baby sitter." This custodial approach to relating to students did not appeal to him but initially the new way of relating to the students was a little uncomfortable. He noted:

> There is less sort of distance between the staff and students. I find that the staff are more black and white with the students. They are more likely to call a spade a spade and not worry so much about the kids self-esteem and coating everything in teacher language. They would say things like, "You screwed up, you didn't do your homework." I didn't hear elementary teachers talk like that. I don't always talk like that. I am more likely to say that to a junior high kid now.

June's and Wayne's experiences were similar. June had gone into the school during the summer break to begin to set up her class as she had done in elementary school. She was surprised that none of the other teachers were coming in early. When the other teachers did come, she found that they were prepared to help her obtain materials. The staff did not appear to offer her much advice or support in helping her to understand or prepare for the different ways that she would have to relate to her students. She did find that her teaching assignment had also been slightly changed over the summer. These changes did not seem to bother her initially.

Gail experienced stronger feelings of apprehension and intimidation as she started the new school term. She noted that "public opinion about junior high is so negative." Gail had been in a school where the teachers had been given extensive inservicing and exposure to "reflection". She explained how she felt:

> I felt that it was a somewhat different atmosphere. Coming from my reflective background, it didn't feel very good. A lot of people. A lot of red tape. It was a little intimidating as well. I was given a budget for the second language department. I was pretty sure that I wasn't up to doing that. But that was OK. I have a lot of background so I can help with that.

Gail was concerned with how she would be perceived by the other teachers on the staff and how they would react to a person that had come from the elementary to the junior high school. She was concerned with how the changes that she was making were going to be perceived by the other members of the experienced teaching staff. Gail eventually made her friendships on the staff with the first year teachers who had joined the staff

with her. She was drawn to the individuals who were experiencing the same feelings of social and professional isolation. She focused on her work:

> It is very, very different from my other schools. I am trying very hard not to make judgments. Just thinking that I am learning and concentrating on what I am doing in class.

Gail found that the atmosphere and the climate of the school were very different from her previous schools. She noted that the initial staff meeting at the beginning of the year had a very long agenda and that it was handled in a very "business like manner." There was very little discussion among or from the teachers. She noted that the school seemed to lack the color of the elementary school and she disliked the dull atmosphere.

> In elementary the bulletin boards were a big thing for me. Even now I see very little work up. Generally, I found that the school was not colorful. I had to get some things, dictionaries to try to make it feel like home for me. I didn't like that there was not much light in the classroom. The rows of desks also bothered me. . . . Overall the school climate itself was not colorful.

School Organization - Junior High

The five teacher narrators found that when they moved to their respective junior high schools that the organization for instruction was different from their expectations.

Robert, teaching a special education class, taught in isolation. He was given a group of specially funded students with whom he spent his entire teaching day. Some of the students would leave the class for integration into a special subject area and then return to the classroom. The only time that the students were away from Robert was when they were getting their library class or their industrial arts and home economics classes. Robert was solely responsible for the delivery of his students' educational program. He felt that his responsibility for his students went beyond the curriculum, and that it was necessary that he care for their physical and emotional needs as well. He explained:

> With these kids you have to produce the goods. For instance, if a kid does not bring a lunch and comes to me and says, "Teacher I am hungry. I did not bring a lunch." A kid said to me the other day, "Teacher we have no food at home." There are two things that I do. First I feed that kid. I took the kid out for lunch. I didn't go to the school looking for a handout. I took the kid. That's my example and showing

> love. I am not just going to listen and say, "Hopefully you will get a piece of bread tonight." I don't react that way. I'll handle the problem. The next thing that I will do is go to the councilor and say, "this little girl has informed me that there is no food at home." She takes the kid out that afternoon and finds out a little bit more about the situation and deals with it at the office level. But the immediate problem, I deal with.

June found that she was in a situation where the students came to her or she went to them every period of the day. Mondays were the worst for her and she dreaded going to school on that day. She had to move six times during the day, seeing a different group of students in each class. She found that time seemed to be her biggest problem related to the organization of the junior high school. She felt that she did not have the time to properly cover the material that she wanted to cover, she did not have the time to deal with remediation of students or even get to know the students, and that often the discipline problems consumed too much of her time stopping her from doing the other tasks that she felt were important for her as a teacher. June was missing the rapport that she found instrumental in her elementary teaching. She described her frustration:

> I blame that on the fact that you only see them for 50 minutes a day, five periods a week, and that's not even every day. I see them four days a week because I get a double period with them. That's four times a week that I see them and for that short period of time it's not enough to build any rapport. . . . There are time restrictions because of the behavior. I could have done wonders with any of these classes if I could have just kept them. You know, but they are off to math or gone to social studies.

June was also feeling some frustration about remediation processes established in her junior high. She felt that she should know the ability level of her students. June was not able to take the time to determine where the children were at and if she did, she believed that the students would reject any help that might be offered. The students demonstrated a great reluctance to be singled out for any special type of attention. She had observed that if the school were organized using a core program model it might have been easier. She wondered:

> Whereas in core, if I was wondering about a child, you could sit down, take fifteen minutes and do a diagnostic reading. OK, they are at a Grade 2 level. Not that it is that important to know, but it gives you somewhere to start. Anyway, I don't get that time to do that. I don't know exactly where they are at this moment. . . . When you are in a core situation you're able to rob time from social studies and language arts. So when you have a child with limited reading ability, instead of focusing

> on all these other things, you can focus on reading in the social studies context. You can make it more meaningful to read it. Not just read it because we have to know this stuff.

June felt that the organization of the school where the students were constantly moving from class to class and from teacher to teacher not only made her teaching difficult but also affected how the students related to the school and their teachers. She described their lack of responsibility:

> I think it just helps to distract them. The fact that they are changing classrooms, they don't have a sense of belonging, they don't have a sense that this is my classroom and that they are going to look after it. They don't sense that this is my teacher, I'm going to look after her.

June also described the systems in place to help teachers deal with some of the difficulties of having many students in many different classes. She noted the difficulties with IEPs and where they were located in the school and that often teachers were not advised about the special needs of a particular student. These forms were not readily available to the teachers when they needed them. They were stored in a binder in the staffroom and when wanted were often not available. The school had allocated the teachers to team units. These teams were to meet on a regular basis and discuss problems with particular students. Often nothing came of these discussions.

June thought that there was a lack of a consistent set of standards established within the school. To her, every teacher in every classroom appeared to operate with their own set of standards and this lack of consistency of expectations often made the task of teaching much more difficult. Students coming from classes where there were low expectations about behavior would be difficult to deal with when coming into classes where the teacher had high expectations. When discussing school discipline, June said:

> I think something like that has to be a whole school effort. You have to have a bit more of a thorough plan set. This happens, then this happens. If this infraction is made, then this is the consequence. Have it laid down precisely and everybody has to follow it. The minute that one staff person doesn't follow it, then there is your weak link. They can get away with it with one teacher so they try it in your class. I think that is something that (principal's name) has come a long way with. I think he will have to take it another step further.

Like June, Wayne also noted that he initially found the management of his time with the students to be difficult. He described the problem:

> I find that some lessons drag a little longer than they should. I don't get it all in. It is not a big problem because I teach core so that I have the same kids so that alleviates some of the problems. But on days when we have a gym period or a full year option or a modular option you really have to skip through it. In math, by the time that you have corrected work, talked about a new concept, most of the work is for homework. With math you can do that. In Language Arts I am finding a problem. It takes longer to do the writing. I am not getting through LA the way that I want to. It is a problem.

Wayne's junior high school was organized differently from June's. Wayne was expected to stay with the same group of students through their three years in the school. This meant that each year he would have to learn at least four new curricula to cover the core subject areas. He could see that there were some advantages and some disadvantages to this type of school organization. He explained:

> There are some unrealistic demands. I would never organize a school that way. I just think that learning three new grade curriculums for three years in a row is too much. From what I have seen of the school's achievement, they are not that good. The whole idea is to improve achievement but I think what you get is lesser quality teaching because the teachers are so tired of learning the curriculum. The teachers are under a lot of stress learning the material year after year and you don't get to recycle materials and get it down pat year after year. So, ultimately, I think that it hurts student achievement.

Wayne's school was organized to offer curriculum support among the teachers. He liked this idea and it helped with the pacing of the programs, which he found problematic. He liked this aspect:

> We have a system. We have teams of teachers at each grade level. I found that it really worked well. Even though on our team there are seven of us and only one of us has taught Grade 7 before. It works very well. There is a lot of sort of delegating duties. There is a group of us going through the same curriculum at the same pace. I found that very helpful because I could get advice from people and I could also say, I am here in this unit, where are you, where should I be or how would you approach this particular lesson. I am not sure how to do this or I don't understand this particular science concept and so that kind of support from colleagues is really helpful. Having a lot of people at the same level which is something you rarely find in the elementary.

Wayne noted that even though this type of organization was helpful, it was also cumbersome.

> One of the things that we have found is that with seven teachers, the planning is difficult. We started to split into pairs and threes. With seven it is just too many. There was too much input. It was just too hard to coordinate.

Wayne also noted some concerns with different teachers dealing with students in discipline situations. He found that his junior high school had a handbook that outlined some procedures that were to be followed. He recognized that different teachers appeared to have different standards and didn't always adhere to the procedures that had been outlined. He described the problem it caused:

> You run into some conflicts with the handbooks about some discipline problems. If I do this with this kid what happens the next time or what will I do with another kid. The handbook only says one thing.

Susanne went to a school that had been experimenting with multi-grade groupings. This had led to a number of problems for the teachers and for the students. The school was currently in the process of phasing out this type of organization. Susanne was entering the school as the program was being phased out. She explained how it worked:

> Cross grade groupings, you know, teach them as a whole and yet we were supposed to individualize the instruction. I first saw it close to the end of the year when I first saw it. I don't imagine that there was a lot of new work being started. But from my observation it was more like a Grade 9 class. I sat in on a couple of math classes. I couldn't understand the multi-grade and I walked out of there not really understanding how it worked. . . . The next year there won't be any. The only thing is the options. I'm teaching a French option. Every teacher teaches their class an option and I have 7, 8, and 9s in that class. (Principal's name) tells me that I would expect that in the future it would continue because that is the school's connection to the multi-grade concept. It will be eliminated in the core subjects because of lack of demand. . . . So the one thing that I am dealing with is that in the past two years the students have been in multi-grade classrooms. They have been exposed to some of the Grade 9 curriculum and they think that they have done it so they say, "We did this. We did this." They think that they have done it so you have a constant thing.

One of the features of the school that attracted Susanne was the technology that was available. She liked the availability of computers in her own classroom. The school had adopted a philosophy of instruction that they felt supported the use of the technology within the school. The students were to work in teams. The philosophy of the school created a problem for Susanne. She said:

> The students work in teams as team members. So many of them don't know how to work individually. Not that they know how to work on teams because they do a lot of copying. I noticed that cooperative learning, I see them doing a lot of copying when they are working

> together. Another thing I noticed is that I don't have individual desks. It just changes the whole atmosphere for the kids. So there are a lot of things that you are fighting.

The technology in the school also promoted isolation for the teachers. The teachers use the technology to communicate with each other. This means that the teachers seldom need to meet and discuss concerns face to face or to pass the time of day. Susanne missed the personal contact with the other teachers. She mentioned this negative aspect:

> I have my own personal computer and we do attendance on them. That is another thing, we have no personal contact. We can sit in front of that machine and we can give messages to one another, that or the phone because we have a phone in our class also. If I chose not to go out in the hallway or go to my neighbor's room or go to the staffroom I may not see any one all day. . . . That is what I feel. You will hear teachers say that it is great because you don't have to walk and another one saying that you won't get varicose veins. But I really feel that it is important to have that personal contact. At least for me. That is how I function the best.

Wayne, June, Gail and Susanne all noted problems with reporting student progress. June was very frustrated because she did not feel that she knew the students well enough on the first and second report cards that were sent out early in the year. Wayne was very unhappy because his school had embarked on a reporting process using a computer program to produce the report cards. The program was supposed to make the process easier, but appeared to be making the task much more difficult and time consuming. Gail was frustrated with the format that she was required to follow which didn't allow her the scope necessary to accommodate the individual differences in her students. Susanne felt that the report cards were nothing but a waste of time because they did not reflect the truth about the students and that there was a lack of interest by the students and the parents. The following comments made by Gail and Wayne reflect some of the feelings expressed by the four teachers.

> Gail: As an elementary teacher we learn not to compare one student to another student. Now the teachers are saying this is your kid right here and this is the class average right here. . . . I don't feel comfortable comparing one student to the rest of the class. I don't mind talking about the kid's mark. . . . They are supposed to be a progress report. But they aren't really. There is nothing really valid in them. I find that the report cards are a problem. I put hand-written comments on the report cards, every single one. I felt that I needed to do that. Each

teacher had given them computerized comments. I wrote a paragraph on how I saw the kid doing.

Wayne: The reporting system is a complete disaster. The computer system does not work. It is completely inefficient. It gave the parents inaccurate information. It gave the wrong marks. . . . Other schools found the same thing. I am not impressed with the school board using us to pilot their stuff. I just don't think it is reasonable. They should get some outside expertise. It probably would have been cheaper to buy it and I think that if they are going to use teachers to work out all these glitches, we should get some compensation. Education doesn't usually work that way.

Relationships with other Staff Members

Establishing relationships with other teaching staff members seems to have been a problem for the teacher narrators. They all noted that the other teachers on staff were prepared to share materials and to offer advice when it was requested. There was a general feeling that their new staffs were more fragmented than those they were used to in elementary schools. The teachers, because of professional concerns, appeared to be more guarded with their comments in this area.

Wayne: There is more specialization on staff. This is so and so's department. They have key people. The people are less jacks of all trades than in the elementary.

Robert: I am in a portable and you know that you sometimes miss some of the communication that occurs in the staffroom. I do miss out on that. It is not that they are withholding the information from me. It is just that I am not there to pick up on the little tidbits.

Susanne: This is the second staff in a row that somehow I didn't quite belong or that somehow I didn't fit. I have my ideas as to why, but I really can't pinpoint it to one thing. It is the combination of staff members. Now with this particular junior high many of them have been elementary staff. I don't really know what it is. It is partially to do with age. I am one of the older staff members. Most of the others are involved in sports, coaching teams, etc., and they themselves play. So that separates us socially. . . . I mean they are really nice. There is a lot of talk about sharing, but I don't see a lot of it.

Gail: I felt some skepticism because I had come from an elementary school. I heard through the grape vine that they were wondering why I had come to a junior high. What is she doing? They were aware of my background. Even though I had told them that I had taught some junior high, I felt that they were wondering why I was making the move. I think they were wondering if I would be overwhelmed by the

> situation. . . . There are a couple of new teachers on this staff that are very much into sharing and offering support. We are all being evaluated this year so, because I am experienced, I am saying, "Don't worry, it will be OK," that sort of thing. So I have been able to establish a real good connection with the younger teachers. We work on weekends a lot. It is kind of nice to have someone who will be working late. We set once a week where we go out and eat and then come back. We kind of help each other that way.

Relationships with Junior High Students

The five teacher narrators all expressed strong feelings about their relationship with students in their junior high schools. Gail, Susanne, June and Wayne experienced some difficulty in their relationships with their new students.

Robert felt strongly about his students. His main concern was that he did not feel that other teachers understood the handicaps that his students were dealing with on a daily basis. Robert took pride in knowing a great deal about each of his students and the needs that he perceived them to have. He elaborated:

> The student commitment to school. I really work on that. . . . Some of the parents just don't know how to draw it out of them. You know school commitment. . . . Some of these kids have visible self evident handicaps. They are aware of it. . . . When they get into a conflict with each other they never throw up the other's handicap. It is always something else.

The area of student relationships appeared to be the area that caused the greatest concern for the other four teachers who had moved from elementary schools to junior high schools. Wayne and Susanne had expressed strong feelings about not enjoying the "baby sitting" climate of the elementary school. They also had strong feelings about the relationships that they were experiencing with the older junior high students.

The four teacher narrators expressed feelings about junior high students related to their lack of respect for teachers, authority, and learning in general.

> Wayne: I was disappointed with the behavior of the kids. During nutrition break, five minutes in the morning and the afternoon, in terms of what I am used to kids in the school, what seems to be wild in the halls, noisy, shouting and sometimes running. That sort of thing. I also noted Grade 8 girls stood out for me. They are just weird, you know.

> Susanne: There was a period of about two and a half weeks where I thought, "Hey this is alright." This isn't so bad and the kids were good.

That doesn't mean that they had changed from being apathetic to some wanting to learn or dying to learn or just being sponges. But the fact that they were well behaved, cooperative, making some effort, and you know it just created a much more pleasant atmosphere. It is possible but it did take a long time. And with this particular class I don't think it will ever get to a stage where I am happy with them. But you count your good days.

Gail: I don't know how to get through to them. That is kind of my challenge. They are so different. The dynamics, I don't know. The Grade 8's are the group that I don't look forward to seeing. There always seems to be one group that you look less forward to seeing.

June: The majority are pretty good all the way around, or they are pretty bad all the way around. But there are a few kids that I relate to well but they don't in other classes. Some kids like math so they like their math teacher. They don't want this art option and yet they are in there so they are just going to give you a bad time. . . . I think mainly just using the kind of language that they thought they could get away with. The amount of disrespect that they could get away with. They just push your rules that you have set in your classroom.

The teachers discussed methods that they have used to draw the students into their programs. They noted limited success with these efforts primarily based on influences that they felt were beyond their control. The major force that appeared to cause difficulty in relating to junior high students was peer pressure.

Wayne: Sometimes I'm sympathetic and listen and we try to talk it out and sometimes I'm a broken record. One of the things that I find is that they try to bring in allies all the time. It is very hard to talk to one. All of a sudden there are six standing there. They are into group things. Like even when I need an errand. They want to take a friend with them. In one gym class, one of them asked to go for a drink and before I knew it six of them had disappeared for 15 minutes. Then I had to deal with that after school.

Susanne: I do see the apathy and yes it does exist and I will do what I can. It is not my imagination cause I just can't believe the number of students that are apathetic in my class. . . . Seat work to me is not the ideal thing. But they don't participate in discussions. You ask them to encourage them to participate. They don't really care. They don't want to participate. And you know Grade 9 a lot of stuff is cut and dry.

June: Their parents are paying good money for them to be here to learn. I'm paying good money for them to be here to learn and I don't even have any kids. You know, we are all paying and here they are goofing off. We are just providing them with ample opportunity to goof off and then every 50 minutes we give them a break. . . . These kids are abusing it like crazy. The Grade 9s are just awful. They have two minutes to change classes and they think of it as a break. This is not

> a break people, this is change of class time. You walk from one room and you sit yourself down in another and you get ready to learn. They wait until the bell rings, then they finish their conversation, and a couple of minutes later they close their locker and off they go and are five minutes late for class. And this is more than just one or two kids. It is 15 to 20 of them.

> Gail: The junior high students get very personal when they attack. They attack the way you look physically or your car or your work. You have to remember not to take it personally. That is their way of hitting out. They will hit out that way. . . . When the students look at the clocks in the class it drives me crazy. So I say to them that if they are so fascinated by the clock they can stay after school and stare at the clock.

The teacher narrators all related a number of stories about their relationships with their students in the school. The stories all centered on the students' apparent apathy towards school and learning and their lack of respect for teachers and the efforts that the teachers were making in the students' interests. The teachers felt that their efforts to be innovative, humorous and caring were not appreciated by their students and, in some cases, the parents. For all five of the teacher narrators it was important to them that their students respect them. This important element which was present in their elementary teaching experience appeared to be lacking in their junior high experience.

The Teacher Workload in Junior High

The teachers found that when they moved to junior high schools their workload changed. The teachers had to learn new curricula, they had to spend more time preparing for lessons, and then had to spend more time marking the work when it was completed. As noted earlier, the experienced junior high teachers in the schools were prepared to share resources and units of study but the new teachers still felt that they were starting from nothing.

> Gail: I did find that even though we did get together and each teacher offers their own program, there didn't seem to be a lot of sharing between grade levels or between the teachers that taught the same thing. They were working in different places on different units.

> Susanne: It seems such a waste in a sense. I am creating my own notes. I'm creating my own exams. It is like reinventing the wheel.

> Wayne: The school has a really good climate. I like working there. There is just work, work, work, as most schools are. From what I hear ours is worse than others and it seems worse to me. . . .The one thing I don't enjoy is the marking load. It is much heavier. It is to the point

where I don't know whether I want to do it anymore. I think I am in a transition.

June: I am very fatigued. Even though I had moved to Grade 6 and it was my first year, I did very little homework on the weekends. Quite often, if it was anything, it was report cards that had to be ready the next day. I worked at least two hours every night for at least the first four months here. Finally about a month ago I decided that when I leave here I am not taking it home. Sometimes I do.

June, Susanne and Wayne all discussed how they had made changes in their work habits and their personal lives to accommodate the changes in their workload.

Wayne: I have been putting in very long hours. I have been sacrificing my family life and interests. I am doing less work this year (since September) but I am less satisfied with what I am doing in the classroom. I am not happy about that. It is part of the martyr syndrome. It is part of the job. I am really struggling to find a balance. . . . It is the lifestyle. I am tired of working every night. I'm tired and I don't see anyway to get out of it.

Susanne: It is not that I am giving up. I teach them what I can. They get what they can. I am not going to lose any sleep over it. Because if I am beating my head against a brick wall, I am just going to injure myself, no one else. . . . I think it is also because I build myself up to these wonderful things that could happen and I find that I am struggling to make it happen. They are not.

June: It has cut into my free time in a big way. . . . I am going to show my horse this summer. I have done enough for them. I haven't been doing homework since May. I have been taking the odd time, and a little on weekends, but I am saving my weekends to ride. I can't do any more than that. I come home, I eat, I ride, and then I go to bed and then get up.

Conclusion

The teachers' narratives were sorted into three major topics: thoughts about their elementary experiences, initial thoughts and feelings as they made the transition to a junior high school, and thoughts and feelings about their junior high experiences. Within these the teachers discussed, finding the new position in a junior high school, junior high school organization, relationships with other staff members, relationships with junior high students, and their workload in junior high. What became evident as I worked with the data, was the challenge to their sense of professional competence which their transfers engendered.

THEMES

The first section of this chapter has dealt with the categories identified through analysis of the transcripts. It focused on areas in the discussions with the teacher narrators that were related to their transfer experiences.

This section of the chapter discusses the major themes that emerged from the teachers' stories. Five themes were identified. They range from the personal impetus for transfer, through the issues of changing relationships and a sense of exclusion to questioning their vocation as teachers. While I expected school culture to play a major part in the teachers' stories and how they made sense of their new surroundings, it became apparent that the teachers were concerned with how their transfers influenced their beliefs about themselves as teachers. The identified themes are: (1) Seeking Professional Challenges, (2) Facing Changing Relationships, (3) Coping with Isolation from Peers, (4) Questioning their Professional Identity, and (5) Personal-Professional Knowledge.

Seeking Professional Challenges

Four of the five teacher narrators in this study referred to the need for increased personal and professional challenges in their teaching careers. Susanne, June, Gail, and Wayne felt that their talents were not being fully utilized at the elementary school level. These teachers had become elementary teachers, not out of first choice, but because the opportunities at the time of their enrollment or graduation from university were more abundant at the elementary school level.

Susanne had previously taught at the junior high level but had been in elementary schools or university for a number of years. She felt that her abilities in science and math were not being fully utilized at the elementary level. She did not feel that the elementary curriculum challenged her and did not present her with material that she found challenging. She felt that this, combined with the way that she had to relate to younger students, made it necessary for her to seek opportunities at the junior high level.

Gail was a second language specialist. She had experienced one year of teaching one class at the junior high level in her previous school. While she enjoyed being able to use her second language skills at a higher level, she did not enjoy the behaviors of the junior high students. She felt challenged to be able to get her students to enjoy and appreciate a second language as much as

she did, and was frustrated that she was not able to get these students to participate in the program in a way that made her feel good about students or her instruction. Gail felt personally challenged by these difficulties and wanted to make the move to junior high to see if she could develop strategies to deal with the curriculum and the motivation of her students.

Wayne was feeling burdened by the challenges of administration and with having to relate to children at a level he did not enjoy. He really never had the desire to be an elementary school teacher. He had wanted to be a high school teacher. When he was attending university it became very clear to him that the possibility of finding a teaching position in a high school was very remote. He then decided to take an elementary route in his teacher education program. In a very short period of time he received a considerable amount of recognition and promotion for his work in elementary schools. He lamented that he felt like a "baby sitter." He felt that the curriculum and the students at a higher level would appeal to him. He relinquished his assistant principal designation and made the move to junior high. He felt that the students in junior high would be more mature. He further felt that dealing with the curriculum at a more challenging level and working with more mature students would present him with a more enjoyable challenge.

June had dreams of being a secondary school physical education teacher. She had the fond memories of favorite gym teachers in her past. She felt that teaching Grade 1 and Grade 6 in the elementary school did not allow her an opportunity to use a specialization not frequently used in elementary schools. She made the move to junior high with the promise that she would be teaching more junior high physical education. She was aware that she would have to teach some other subjects as well. A great deal of her sense of herself came from her relationship with her students. In elementary school establishing rapport with students was important to June. Getting junior high students to cooperate more fully in the program and getting them to more fully participate in a productive student-teacher relationship became a major challenge for June.

Robert did not have the problems faced by the other four teacher narrators. Robert had long ago accepted frequent career changes. He accepted new challenges as part of his professional life. He welcomed the challenge of getting to know his students very well. He saw this as his primary responsibility as a special education teacher. Robert spent time in

the summer introducing himself to his students and their parents. He knew that he would be working in relative isolation from the other teachers and the school as he taught a select group of students isolated in a free standing portable classroom about 50m. from the main building. The main challenge for Robert was to get the students to accept him and the ways he did things. He believed in hugging students and making sure that they knew that he cared for them.

Facing Changing Relationships

For four of the five teacher narrators there appeared to be changes that they had to make in the way that they related to students, parents, teachers, and administrators. The teachers were leaving teaching staffs where they were respected by their peers, known in the community by the parents, and known by the students. They had established ways of working with and dealing with those around them. All of the teachers discussed the cooperative climates that they had come from, particularly relating stories of how the teachers shared in planning and the overall work experience. They had to make adjustments in their relationships as they each embarked on their junior high experiences.

Susanne was very vocal in this area. She had been on an elementary staff where she did feel a little isolated from the other teachers. She was not sure why this occurred. She complained that in the elementary school she did not like to be considered nothing but a "baby sitter" and resented it when a student would slip and call her "mom." She appeared to have had a good working relationship with the principal of her elementary school. Some things did change dramatically for Susanne when she went to her new junior high. She was new on staff. The other teachers felt that she was an experienced junior high teacher even though she had not taught at that level for some time. She felt that she was "older" than the other teachers and isolated from them because she did not compete in sports or socialize with them after hours. She enjoyed the technology in the school but also complained that it further isolated her because she did not have to meet with the other teachers in the staffroom or the halls. Messages were sent by computer. She discussed the lack of respect that she received from students and parents during classes and meetings. Susanne was having a difficult time establishing

relationships within the school that went beyond the surface professional interactions that are required in the day to day operation of a school.

Gail had come from an elementary school where the teachers were involved in a lot of group planning and cooperative activities. When she entered the junior high school she was seen as an experienced teacher even though she saw herself differently. She established relationships with the first year teachers on staff. She also noted that most of the experienced teachers were involved in sports and in extra-curricular activities based on sports. She noted that she had no talent in this area. The administrators in the school felt that she had some expertise to offer by asking her to coordinate the second language program budget. She felt uncomfortable doing this but was helped by one of the assistant principals. Gail was also concerned with how she would be perceived by the other teachers on staff when she was making decisions about putting up bulletin boards in the halls. Gail had come from a school that was involved in "reflective practice" and team planning. Even though there were plans to adopt these programs in her new school, there did not appear to be any plans to implement the changes that might have promoted greater communication among the staff. She noted that her relationship with the administrators of the school was more "business like" than her former elementary school. There was little discussion of issues.

Wayne might have had the opportunity to move to a junior high school and retain his assistant principalship. He noted that he would have felt very uncomfortable doing this and felt that he needed to learn the junior high position from the "trenches." He discussed how teachers in junior high schools relate to students in different ways from those in elementary schools. He felt that in elementary schools teachers were always worried about the child's self image. In junior high the teachers were more inclined to call a "spade a spade" with the students. He found this difficult at first but gradually became more at ease with a new way of relating to students. Wayne enjoyed the people with whom he worked. He appreciated the administration of the school and found them to be supportive. When he first arrived there was supposed to be a considerable amount of team planning but he found that this gradually fell apart because his team was too large to coordinate.

June found that she was isolated in her new school. She had established relationships and friendships with the elementary school staff and she maintained some of these relationships through social activities even after she

had left the school. She found on her arrival in junior high school that teachers offered materials but support in other ways was lacking. June had strong beliefs about how a junior high school should be organized and run but she felt alone in these beliefs. She recognized that all the teachers had their own ways of relating to students and that nothing seemed to be uniform in the school. This led to problems for her because she did not know where she stood on some issues that were important to her. She wanted to establish rapport with the junior high students but did not know how to do it. She noted that the students felt no ownership of the school or their teacher. She had expected that the students would take care of her as she wished to take care of them. These new relationships had not happened for her. In elementary school the rapport was present for June because the students spent all day with her and felt ownership of their class and their teacher. These close relationships assisted in the management of the program and student behaviors.

Robert was concerned about relating to his students on a personal level. He wanted his students to know that he liked them and that they could trust him to assist them. He spent a lot of class time developing a sense of family in his classroom. This was his normal way of operating, whether in elementary school or in junior high. This method of teaching presented no dilemmas for him. He was not concerned with relating to other teachers on the staff. Robert did not visit the staffroom and was not part of the professional and social exchanges that take place among teachers. He wanted to relate to the other teachers if he needed their support to obtain permission for a student to be in their class or he needed help in obtaining outside school help for a student in need. He missed the casual staffroom talk that filled him in on what was happening, but although he was isolated in his classroom with his students, Robert was generally satisfied with his level of contact with the junior high staff.

Coping with Isolation from Peers

This theme was very prevalent in Susanne's, Gail's and June's stories. Wayne and Robert also experienced feelings of isolation but in different ways. Susanne felt that she was isolated from the other staff members. She described how she was cloistered in her classroom with her students all day long and did not have much contact with any of the other teachers. She was not given someone to mentor her through the changes that she was experiencing in her

new position. Because of the experimental nature of the school, most of the experienced teachers on the staff had previously been elementary teachers but they were younger than she was and had interests that were not the same as hers. They were involved in school sports and social activities that evolved around their sporting activities. Not being interested in these activities, she felt an outsider. For her this was exacerbated because much of the communication in the school was done by phone or by using their computers.

Susanne came into the school as the experimental multi-graded component was being phased out. The other teachers were familiar with the materials that the students had covered in previous years and she was constantly searching for materials to which the students had not been exposed. She felt that she was the only teacher facing this challenge but that others saw her as an experienced teacher who should be able to deal with these challenges.

Gail, as already noted, felt isolated for very similar reasons as Susanne. She was seen as an experienced teacher, but she did not fit in with the circle of experienced teachers on the staff. She wanted to try and do things that were not normally done in that junior high. She continued some student reporting practices that she believed important and that were familiar to her from the elementary school. She was concerned about making the school and the classroom a welcoming environment for her students. She changed her displays regularly while the other teachers left the same displays up for a year. She made some changes that she felt were necessary but wondered how these changes were perceived by the other teachers on staff. Gail established relationships with the first year teachers on staff. She said they welcomed her knowledge of evaluation for permanent teaching contracts and she wanted to help since she too would be evaluated. However, while the first year teachers participated in a school district program to assist them in making the transition from university to school life, she was given no one to assist her in the transition from elementary school to junior high school.

June noted that generally she stayed away from the staffroom. She found that most of the conversation was meaningless and not helpful to her situation. June also felt that the experienced teachers were not interested in listening to her problems of adjustment. June also had strong ideas about what was wrong with the way junior highs were organized. She had a difficult time accepting the methods that some teachers used in their classrooms and

believed that there should be standards adopted for the entire school. She felt that the most help that she had received in the year was through her participation in this research project. It had helped her to clarify some of her thinking in certain areas.

Wayne enjoyed the teachers with whom he worked. His feelings of isolation stemmed from his questioning of his desire to remain a teacher. He felt that teaching isolated him from the personal things that he wanted to do. He wanted to spend more quality time with his son and his family. Wayne felt that the amount of time that he had to spend marking and preparing for classes robbed him of time that could be spent doing things that seemed more important to him at this point in his life. He openly wondered if he was the only one that was having these kinds of thoughts.

Robert didn't mind isolation. He basically took things as he found them. He noted that he was very used to working independently of others and seemed to prefer this style of teaching. He was able to set the standards that he felt suited his needs and his students' needs. He did wonder whether he felt the same way about certain administrative decisions as other people. He had no means of checking his perceptions. He had not been in the school system for long and certainly had not established the type of relationships on his new staff that would make him feel secure enough to discuss his concerns.

Questioning their Professional Identity

All of the teacher narrators, through career transitions, either voluntary or involuntary, questioned their continuing role as educators. Some of the teachers were already questioning themselves before their transfers while others started to question themselves after they had made the decision to move to junior high schools from elementary schools.

Susanne, who had previously taught junior high students, questioned her ability to deal with what she perceived to be a very changed junior high student population. She was very concerned about the new-found student and parent apathy that seemed prevalent in junior high schools. Fighting this apathy, which she perceived to exist among her students and parents, appeared to consume her thoughts. She felt exhausted in trying to get her students to cooperate and take from her what she felt she could offer to them. However, the students did not appear to want to participate. She appeared angry and frustrated and did not know where to look for help so that she could

be the teacher she wanted to be. She noted that she was a "follower" but in her situation there was no one for her to follow.

Gail was confident that she was a good teacher and was determined to go on and attempt new things with her students. She was determined that she was going to continue to put up interesting bulletin boards and to write extensive comments on the computer report cards. She did have some regrets about making the transition to junior high but once there she was determined to learn by trial and error the skills that she needed to do a good job.

June was feeling very frustrated. She wanted respect from her students and she expected them to cooperate with her. She found that the students were not doing that. She noted that even when she was prepared to give students extra help in certain subjects the students would not avail themselves of the offer because of peer pressure. She felt that the students did not care. The students did not respect the school, her classes, or her. She was ready to move back to an elementary school when she was offered a core teaching assignment at the grade seven level. This would mean not as much physical education but it would mean having her own group of students for most of the day. This meant that, in many ways, her greatest concerns, lack of rapport with students and lack of time, might be more manageable.

Wayne was feeling frustrated by time. He felt that he did not have the time that he needed for his family. He felt that he was pushed to keep up with the experienced teachers on the staff. He was not sure that he was getting any pleasure out of teaching and contemplated leaving teaching for law school.

Robert was going along doing his own thing in his own way. He worked by himself in his class and was quite happy to be left alone. He was upset with some administrative requirements that were placed on him when teaching special education students. He wished that those things would just go away or, if need be, he would just ignore them. He would continue to do what he was doing until his retirement when he and his wife would do mission work through their church.

Personal-Professional Knowledge

The teacher narrators' thinking determined how they made the adjustment to junior high schools. The teacher narrators were clinging to the prior knowledge obtained from being educated and experienced elementary teachers. It appears that the level of frustration that each individual

experienced was dependent upon the amount of control that they felt they had over their situation. As problems emerged, the teachers generally concentrated more on their own classrooms and their personal lives, withdrawing from the school staff and not fully performing some of the tasks usually associated with teaching. The new teachers were experienced and their withdrawal from others made it increasingly difficult to ask for assistance from the experienced teachers on staff.

Some of the teachers approached making the move in a more thoughtful manner while others appeared to make the move for more whimsical reasons. When Susanne decided to teach in junior high school after completing her year at university, she made her decision about the school primarily because of the reputation of the school principal. She did spend about three months in the school observing and working with an experienced junior high teacher. She did not seem to acquire knowledge of how the restructuring of the school was going to impact instruction the following year.

Wayne had been a school assistant principal. When he expressed a desire for change, his elementary principal assisted him in locating a position. Wayne visited the junior high school and the principal once. On the basis of that one visit he decided to relinquish his assistant principal designation and join the junior high school staff.

Gail was a teacher with recognized expertise teaching a second language. She had very limited exposure to junior high schools and students. Gail was encouraged and assisted by administrators in finding her position in a junior high school. She visited the school and was assured that the staff would be exploring reflective practice and collegial planning which she felt was very important. Gail had very fond memories and maintained contact with some of her junior high teachers, which influenced her decision.

Robert was accustomed to making transitions. He had worked in many locations outside of his current school district. Regardless of where Robert taught, he maintained certain beliefs about children and schooling. He was declared surplus to an elementary school staff. He had to find a new school. Robert's choice of the junior high school was based on its proximity to his home. Being a special education teacher, he was very used to working in isolation from other teachers, so these concerns were not important to him in making his choice.

June's decision to leave elementary school was based on her desire to teach secondary physical education to girls. She talked about the elementary school and the staff that she worked with in very favorable terms. Her husband was also making a transition from teaching elementary school to teaching high school. She made her decision about which school to go to based on the reputation of the school's principal. Her husband had worked with him in an elementary school. She did visit the school and talked to the school's administrators once before the end of the previous school term.

Susanne, Gail and June felt a need for the guidance of an experienced teacher. Susanne did make some contact with programming consultants within the school district. Even with this help, she experienced frustration adapting materials to meet the students' needs for a varied curriculum. Gail and June wanted the help of more experienced junior high teachers but did not make the decision to find a staff member nor did they approach the school administrators to provide one for them. Gail established friendships with some first year teachers on the staff and offered her advice and assistance to them. Susanne, Gail, June and Wayne all commented that the other teachers were very willing to share materials, however there was very little sharing of strategies that might have worked with the students. Susanne, June and Gail had contact with the other teachers as they met in the halls. The teachers did not frequent the staffroom to participate in the informal, social and professional discussions with the other teachers. They withdrew more and more into their own classrooms.

Susanne and June gradually started to withhold their full service from their teaching responsibilities. Teachers generally recognize that it is necessary and part of their profession that work be completed in after school hours. As the frustration level increased for these two teachers they started to use less of their free time for work related tasks. June noted that she was not even taking work home anymore. Wayne had made it part of his plan when he made the move that he was going to be involved in fewer after hours activities. He did agree to coach one of the school teams but complained about the amount of time that was involved in these activities and that it made it hard for him to keep up with the marking and planning aspects of his work.

Susanne, June and Gail all commented about the environments that they liked in their classrooms. Susanne and Gail like students to be sitting in a more traditional setting. Susanne did comment that she liked the students to do

group work but seemed to have a low tolerance for noisy, off task behaviors. June liked to have a quiet class where students spent their time applying themselves to the tasks that she planned for them. Susanne and June did not appear to have the knowledge necessary to get the students to cooperate with them to establish a learning environment that the teachers felt would meet the students' needs. Gail wanted to continue to create a pleasant learning environment similar to her elementary classes. She would go to great lengths to make her room pleasing and comfortable. She noted that the other junior high teachers did not do this and it troubled her. She was resolved to continue to decorate her room and to put up pleasant bulletin board displays.

Wayne did have more contact with some of the other teachers. He participated in the team planning meetings. He did seem aware of what was happening in a room of another teacher and the administrators lack of response to the difficulties that a teacher was facing. Wayne was concerned that his job as a teacher not take more time than was necessary so that he could spend time with his own family, following his own interests.

Robert preferred to be left on his own with his students. He resented administrative requirements that took time and energy that would be better spent with the students. He was comfortable adapting the curriculum to meet the particular needs of his students. Robert would contact and converse with the other teachers when there was a student need that had to be satisfied. He felt that he was in control of his teaching situation and did not mind the lack of assistance from others.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the categories and then themes that were formulated from the examination and interpretation of the information presented in the five teacher narrators' stories.

While the categories document the events and the teachers' reactions of their transfer experiences, the themes express challenges to these teacher narrators' sense of professional competence, their concern about belonging to a staff, and their changing relationships with students which tested their individual sense of themselves as teachers.

The data for this research were gathered with Susanne, Gail, Wayne and Robert during the 1994 - 1995 school year. The data gathered with June was compiled in spring, 1993 as a pilot project for this study.

June, Susanne, Gail, and Robert have continued at the junior high level. They continue to express some dissatisfaction with their decision to move from elementary schools.

June had switched to teaching a Grade 7 core program. She was finding this assignment to be much more satisfying than the assortment of subjects and grades that she was assigned to teach in her first year.

Robert continues to teach his group of junior high special education students. He has begun to contemplate his retirement which he feels is now six or seven years away.

Gail and Susanne have continued to teach the same subjects but are feeling less stressed as they have become known to the students and the staff. Gail still often thinks of returning to teach in an elementary school but continues to struggle to gain acceptance in the junior high school. Susanne still functions in isolation from her colleagues and is still concerned about the apathy of students towards subject content and lack of respect for teachers.

After a year, 1995 - 1996, as an assistant principal of another junior high school, Wayne has resigned his administration designation and returned to teach Grade 4 in an elementary school. He is enjoying this new experience and is sure that he will not return to teach in junior high or be an administrator in any school.

Chapter Five

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, I worked with five teacher narrators as they were making the transition from being successful elementary teachers to being junior high teachers. Together we explored how they adapted to their new school cultures as they described how their previous experiences as elementary teachers and their new experiences as junior high teachers impacted on how they came to a new understanding of themselves as teachers. The teachers and I analyzed their stories as they were told and retold. From the analysis, I developed the themes, which have been related to some relevant literature. These are followed by implications for practice and further research. Finally, my reflections about this research process are presented.

Overview of the Study

There has been a considerable amount of dialogue in recent years about school effectiveness and an emphasis in recent documents on the quality of instruction being offered in schools. (Berry and Ginsberg, 1991; Midgley, Eccles and Feldlaufer, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 1995) However, as these writers emphasize, the improvement in outcomes outlined in these documents is dependent on the effectiveness and morale of the teaching staff. School organizations need to be flexible enough to allow people to explore different staffing positions so that their full potential as contributors to the quality of instruction can be realized. Schein (1980) asked:

> . . . if the organization is genuinely concerned about building long-range effectiveness, must it not develop a system for hiring and socializing employees which makes them feel wanted, secure, meaningfully engaged in their jobs, and positively committed to organizational goals? Furthermore, must it not also build into its career development system a concern for genuine psychological growth in order to ensure the flexibility and creativity that may be required for some future time? (p. 249)

The role that the teacher plays in the perceived effectiveness of schools and the achievement of students is seen as being central to the improvement of education. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and expectations influence the learning environment which also affects the education of the students. Midgley, Feldlaufer, and Eccles (1989) noted that:

> Teachers are a very important part of the classroom environment. Teacher expectations and beliefs have been shown to influence student motivation and achievement both directly through observable teacher behaviors and indirectly through more subtle forms of communication. (p. 247)

It was the purpose of this study to explore how teachers' sense of self was impacted by making a career transition from being experienced elementary teachers to becoming junior high teachers. Specifically, this study explored how experienced teachers (1) use constructions of their past experiences to make sense of their new experiences, (2) link the stories of their present transition experiences to their past experiences, and (3) accommodate the transition experiences to their ongoing understanding of themselves as teachers and their future plans as teachers.

The five teacher narrators who volunteered for participation in this study were perceived by others and themselves as being successful elementary teachers. Although they had different personal backgrounds, different educational backgrounds, and different elementary teaching experiences, they all decided to make a career transition to junior high school teaching. Some of their reasons for making the career transition were similar and some were different.

June, Susanne and Wayne strongly felt that they were not being personally and intellectually challenged in the elementary classroom. Susanne and Wayne had strong feelings that they were too involved in the lives of their students and that as teachers they wanted to be involved with more emotionally and academically independent students.

Susanne, Wayne and Gail felt that they had areas of expertise that were not being fully utilized in the elementary school. They had spent time at university being educated in particular subject areas but they were not able to use their specialized knowledge in teaching younger children.

Gail also decided to make a transfer to junior high school because she had a bad experience with one group of Grade 8 students and felt personally challenged to try teaching junior high on a full-time basis. She was actively recruited by principals because of her perceived expertise in the teaching of second languages.

Robert found himself in a junior high special needs classroom because of being declared surplus in his previous elementary school and he accepted the junior high position because it was reasonably close to his home.

Each of the five teacher narrators was involved in a series of audio taped conversations with me. As the teachers told their stories about their careers and transition experiences, they were encouraged to review their transcripts, adding insight and rich detail.

Then the transcript data were analyzed and categories developed for further discussion and analysis. The categories were reported under three major topics: (a) thoughts about their elementary experiences, (b) initial thoughts and feelings as they made the transition to a junior high school, and (c) thoughts and feelings about their junior high experiences. Bridges (1994) has identified three over-lapping stages of career transition which reflect the categories identified through analysis of this research data.

> 1. An ending, during which one disengages from and breaks the old identity with "the way things were."
> 2. A neutral zone, when one is in between two ways of doing and being, having lost the old and not yet having found a way to live with the new.
> 3. A new beginning, after which one again feels at home and productive in "the way things are" with a new identity based on the new conditions. (p. 195)

However, during the year of data-gathering, only Robert settled into Bridges' Stage 3. Robert was able to make a successful transition because of his unique teaching position and prior experiences. He was used to working in isolated locations with a lack of peer or administrator support. He was very comfortable with his personal beliefs about curriculum and in establishing relationships with students.

Five themes were identified. These were (1) Seeking Professional Challenges, (2) Facing Changing Relationships, (3) Coping with Isolation from Peers, (4) Questioning their Professional Identity, and (5) Personal-Professional Knowledge. Each theme is discussed in relation to this research and some relevant literature.

Theme 1: Seeking Professional Challenges

Education is a profession where the opportunities for advancement through increased personal challenges are limited. There is a tendency for individuals to remain in a teaching position at a certain level for a number of years. Even the possibilities for advancement and movement among schools of different grade levels is infrequent despite teachers experiencing stress due to stagnation and lack of personal challenge. Lamarre and Umpleby (1991) noted

that, "(d)issatisfied educators tend to remain in education while seeking to make their roles more challenging" (p. 9). Organ (1990) notes that job

> satisfaction derives from comparisons. . . . satisfaction or dissatisfaction are "inherently referential." One is satisfied to the extent that outcomes or conditions approximate some conception of "what they might have been" - which in turn may be defined by social comparison processes, prior experiences, or implicit promises. (p. 56)

All of the teachers in the study had reached a plateau in their careers when they decided to make the career transition to junior high schools from elementary schools. June, Gail, Susanne and Wayne all to greater or lesser degrees felt that they were no longer being challenged at the elementary school level. Robert had decided some time before that he would remain a special education teacher until he retired. He was not overly concerned with the level he taught. He was more concerned with his involvement with his students. Robert wanted to cast aside administrative procedures that he felt were unnecessary for him to be able to do his work effectively.

The individuals who participated in this study all expressed feelings that their talents and skills could be utilized more fully at the junior high level. Gail, Susanne, Wayne and June felt that they had skills and knowledge that was being under-utilized at the elementary level or they felt that they could relate to junior high aged children more effectively and therefore experience greater success. Robert initially had feelings of being undervalued when he was declared surplus in his previous elementary school. Reed and Kelly (1993) noted that:

> Individuals who believe that their unique talents are valued and respected by the organization may be more likely to commit to the organization's goals and to expend significant energy to achieve those goals; individuals who believe that their unique talents are neither valued nor respected are faced with the choice of withdrawing from the organization (physically and/or psychologically), or engaging management in combat over his (sic) personal and professional identity and role. In either case, the organization loses because a potentially valuable human resource is expending effort to protest his individuality and professional identity within the organization rather than striving to achieve organizational goals. (p. 76)

Theme 2: Facing Changing Relationships

Susanne was the only one of the teachers who previous to the transition had spent some time in a junior high school to become familiar with its

environment and culture. Gail had taught one class of junior high students. This experience left her frustrated because the students would not take an interest in her area of expertise and would not fully participate in the activity or recognize the knowledge she had to share with them. The other teachers made the transition without any previous experience except their own as students.

Researchers have found that there are some very distinctive differences between elementary and junior high schools. (Allen et al., 1993; Midgley et al. 1991; Steinberg, 1996) The differences exist in the organizational structure, the social interactions, the relationships between teachers and students, relationships among teachers and administrative involvement. For the teachers in this study, while they had some sense of the differences between elementary and junior high schools, they thought the only changing relationship would be with their students.

The teachers all noted the problems associated with time. In Wayne's case in particular, problems arose because of the number of meetings he was required to attend and this made his personal life and personal planning time more restricted. It was also evident that because junior high schools are organized in subject time blocks, it was more difficult to get to know their students and to offer help when it was required. Susanne, Gail, Wayne and June discussed the difficulty they had getting to know their students well enough to be able to remediate problems. Midgley et al. (1989) report that:

> Junior high schools are typically larger and less personal than elementary schools. Because of departmentalization, junior high school teachers generally instruct many more students than do elementary teachers, making less likely that they will come to know students well. Junior high school teachers feel that it is difficult to affect the achievement of a large number of students, especially because they see each student for a relatively small proportion of the school day. (p. 247)

Junior high is described as being more subject oriented. The elementary teacher is less concerned with the curriculum and with content than with learners and often, because of long periods of exposure to a child, becomes involved and concerned with the child's personal life. Midgley, et al. (1991) noted that:

> there is evidence of a change in the student/teacher relationship after the transition to junior high school. As predicted, post-transition teachers are characterized as less caring, warm, friendly, and

> supportive than pre-transition teachers. These characterizations come from trained observers as well as from the students themselves. (p. 119)

Wayne and Susanne in particular expressed concern that they felt that they were too involved with their children's personal lives. Fletcher (1990) notes that being

> subject-centered the teachers were more concerned with conveying a particular concept than getting involved in the lives of students. The contrast in perceptions of teachers . . . suggest(s) the nature of school policy (student-versus subject-focus) affects teachers' perceptions of their role. The degree to which teachers believe they can accomplish their designated role affects their sense of efficacy. (p. 5)

This aspect of their elementary teaching positions for Wayne, June and Susanne seemed to cause them stress and was one of the key determining factors in making their decisions to make the career transition to junior high schools. They felt that they would be dealing with a more mature student and this would enable them to focus on the curricula and their particular areas of interest and expertise.

Robert, because of his isolated teaching position with special needs students continued to be very involved in the personal lives of his small group of students. He made a conscious effort to nurture his students' social, emotional and academic needs. Robert felt that this aspect of his teaching was more important than academic concerns.

Theme 3: Coping with Isolation from Peers

As the five teacher narrators began teaching in the junior high schools, a new socialization process started for each of them. They had to learn to make adjustments to fit into their new organizational cultures. The teachers had all formed personal and professional relationships in their previous elementary schools that had proven to be supportive and rewarding. As the teacher narrators entered their new schools they were perceived as being experienced teachers who had previously demonstrated the necessary competencies of good teachers. The socialization of individuals to the organization and its members is important because the

> socialization process orients them to the values and assumptions of the organization. . . . Successful socialization increased potential success in the organization, while unsuccessful orientation can lead to alienation, unproductive activities, and eventually exit from the organization. (Abelson, 1993, p. 351)

Hargreaves (1994) further noted that:

> Collaboration and collegiality, . . . take teacher development beyond personal, idiosyncratic reflection, or dependence on outside experts, to a point where teachers can learn from each other, sharing and developing their expertise together. Research evidence also suggest that the confidence that comes with collegial sharing and support leads to greater readiness to experiment and take risks, and with it a commitment to continuous improvement among teachers as a recognized part of their professional obligation. (p. 186)

Wayne, June, Gail and Susanne had all experienced some difficulty in their socialization to their new school culture and to the relationships that would make them successful teachers. When discussing the importance of collegiality as a virtue Sergiovanni (1992) found that:

> There is widespread agreement that collegiality among teachers is an important ingredient of promoting better working conditions, improving teaching practice, and getting better results. (p. 86)

He further noted that:

> The culture of most schools is characterized by norms of privatism and isolation, which keep teachers apart. Furthermore, although administrators often talk about the value of collegiality, their actions sometimes encourage teachers to compete, rather than cooperate. Moreover, breaking with the norms of isolation and privatism can make teachers more vulnerable to censure and criticism from administrators. (p. 88)

The teacher narrators discussed how the teachers on staff had provided them with curricular materials, how the administration had welcomed them to the school and in Gail's case recognized her expertise by giving her curriculum responsibilities beyond her classroom, yet none of the teacher narrators discussed how particular teachers had emerged to mentor them through their new experience. They had mentioned that such individuals had come forward when they had started teaching in elementary schools and that this collaborative atmosphere had continued over their time in the elementary setting. Abelson (1993) noted that

> culture is not the perspective of one individual. Cultures evolve through the agreement of meaning shared with others in the unit(s) of interest. . . . Through the social information process the cognition gradually starts a process of transforming into a belief and eventually becomes an assumption. . . . Some of these cognitions eventually evolve into a perceived communality. (p. 335)

The teachers, with the exception of Susanne who spent some time in the school the previous year, were making the career transition without being given the opportunity to observe and learn the accepted practices of their new school cultures. Unlike elementary schools, the junior high teachers did not appear at the school until the school opened at the start of the new academic year. The transferred teachers were not able to learn the accepted practices of their new school cultures from experienced teachers in that culture; instead, they had to draw on their previous elementary teaching experiences for support. Organ and Bateman (1986) noted that in organizations it is important for ". . . people to learn how to do things, form impressions of others, influence one another, and develop ties to groups" (p. 6). If the socialization of the new members is successful, the organization is stronger. Abelson (1993) stressed that if

> practices are interpreted by most of the members of the unit in the same way, it can be said that a strong culture exists. When there are differences in the interpretation among unit members, the culture is "less consistent or weaker." (p. 337)

Instead of strengthening the existing junior high programs by the addition of experienced elementary teachers, it may have had the reverse effect. All of the teachers who participated in this study learned their new positions in relative isolation from other teachers.

The teacher who cared least about belonging to a school culture was Robert. He gained his personal ties and job fulfillment by forming close personal ties to his students. He related to the school administration and other teachers only to serve the needs of his students. Robert was concerned with the quality of life that he experienced with his students and his home. Forming professional personal relationships was less important to him.

The teachers were isolated by subject specialization, by personal interests or lack of interest, by time, and by technology. June felt considerable stress in her junior high position. Little help was offered. She withdrew herself from the other teachers and became more involved in her personal life. Gail, because of her subject specialization and lack of athletic ability, formed friendships with the first year teachers on staff. Wayne discussed the stress of time demands on him and his desire to spend more of his personal time and effort with his own family. Susanne felt isolated because she saw herself as different from the other teachers. She believed that the use

of technology in the classroom for communication allowed teachers to withdraw from each other.

Reed and Kelly (1993) noted that an employee

> has constraints on the amount of individuality he (sic) can express in the organization and the amount of input he has into role definition. He may feel that he can express "60%" of his "true self," and thus engages in impression management . . . to maintain organizational acceptance. However, in the process, he becomes estranged from his true self. (p. 57)

Assumptions were made by the junior high administrators and staff that because the teacher narrators were experienced teachers they would know what to do and how to do it. These taken-for- granted assumptions possibly prevented other teachers from offering their support to the new staff members. This type of support and encouragement is usually offered to first year teachers. The teacher narrators saw themselves as competent experienced teachers who had proven themselves in elementary schools. This, in turn, made it more difficult for them to ask or receive help or advice in dealing with students, daily routines and curriculum issues. As well, two of the five teacher narrators were aware that they would be evaluated by their administrators and may have hesitated to reveal their concerns because it might be viewed as a weakness.

Theme 4: Questioning their Professional Identity

Gail, Wayne, Susanne and June all experienced their greatest difficulties in coming to an understanding of how to relate to students and how to motivate the students to care about and learn the material that was being presented. The feelings of frustration in dealing with curricula and the apparent apathy of students caused the teachers to question their decision to relocate and further alienated them from the rest of the teaching staff. They had the feeling that they were the only ones experiencing these types of problems.

Ross (1994, p. 3) defined teacher efficacy as teachers' perceived ability to impact on the learning of their students. Fletcher (1990) noted that:

> a teacher's sense of efficacy is defined with respect to a teacher's role as instructional leader in a classroom, rather than the other duties of a teacher. (p. 3)

Greenwood, Olejnik and Parkay (1990) have used teacher efficacy as a means to help describe the apparent effectiveness of teachers. They defined teacher efficacy as

> the teacher's belief in his or her ability to affect student performance. It is further defined as consisting of two sub dimensions: (a) teaching efficacy and (b) personal efficacy, the former consisting of beliefs regarding the extent to which teachers in general can motivate students to achieve and the latter of the teacher's beliefs about his or her personal ability to influence student performance. (p. 102)

Midgley et al. (1989) reporting on findings by Fuller and Izu (1986), found that "elementary teachers feel more efficacious than do secondary teachers" (p. 247). These studies report that the higher the grade level taught by a teacher the less teacher efficacy seemed to be present. Elementary teachers, and in particular early childhood teachers, perceived higher teacher efficacy than did teachers at the secondary level. Consequently, the teachers who have made the career transition from elementary schools where they had a high sense of efficacy to junior high schools where teachers in general have a lower sense of efficacy, may experience frustration because they will no longer be able to maintain the same level of influence over student learning that they enjoyed as elementary teachers.

Most junior high schools provide some programming which helps elementary students adjust to the junior high school environment; when elementary teachers make a similar move their sense of self as teachers may well be challenged if they are not given appropriate assistance in adjusting to the junior high school.

Even though our conversations were spread out throughout the year, the teacher narrators had not yet discovered new ways of doing things and relating to students at the junior high level. They had wanted to rid themselves of the elementary school methodologies of their past, but those learned behaviors, values and beliefs often impeded their experimentation to discover new ways of teaching and relating to students in junior high school. The teacher narrators had discussed coming in early to set up classrooms and found that junior high teachers didn't do that. Gail was concerned with decorating her classroom and display boards as she had done in elementary school. Wayne, Susanne and June wanted to related to more mature students but found that junior high students lacked the maturity in attitude and behavior that they expected. These unrealized expectations became a source of

frustration and uncertainty resulting in concern about their futures as teachers.

It was apparent that the five teachers were relying on learned behaviors from past experiences as teachers in elementary schools. Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) found that when they discussed critical incidents with teachers, the new lived experience

> does not necessarily introduce anything totally new into the practices of the teacher. Rather, it probably acts to crystallize ideas, attitudes and beliefs that the teacher has more generally or less consciously held up to that point. (p. 63)

Four of the five teachers in this study were feeling various levels of frustration regarding their apparent lack of ability to influence the work and the quality of the work done by their students. Gail, Susanne, Wayne and June all expressed feelings that the students were not responding to their efforts in a way that they had expected. They were questioning their ability as teachers, yet they had all experienced success as teachers in the elementary schools.

Theme 5: Personal-Professional Knowledge

Susanne, Wayne, Gail and June each had professional and personal reasons for wanting to make the career transition to junior high schools from teaching in elementary schools. They felt that their particular skills and subject knowledge expertise was being utilized by teaching in elementary schools. They had feelings of not being intellectually challenged. For Susanne, Wayne and June these thoughts and feelings were self initiated. Gail's motivation was a combination of her own reflection and from administrators who encouraged her to make the move. June and Gail had fond memories of former junior high and high school teachers. Wayne and Susanne expressed thoughts about how they had to relate to elementary students. They felt that they would be more comfortable working with older, more mature students. Wayne and June were concerned with the time commitment and the energy level that was required to teach in elementary schools.

Bolles (1994) discussed the thinking or sometimes lack of thinking that individuals make when contemplating important decisions.

> Huge life-decisions often are made in the whim of a moment. This is, indeed, the way most career choices (and career-changes) are made. . . .

> The alternative to whim and impulse is planning, and hard thinking and work. . . . Choices made intelligently, based on sure knowledge of who we are, almost always turn out to be far superior to choices made by a roll of the dice. (p. 166)

Gail had some limited previous experience teaching French in a junior high school. This experience was not very successful. It became one of the reasons for her decision to make the career transition to teaching junior high French.

Susanne spent approximately three months in the junior high school, working with other teachers, before the start of the new term when she would be on her own. She did not appear to be aware or have knowledge of the challenges that she was going to face the next year. Susanne noted that she was a "follower" not a "leader." It is apparent from her comments that she did not ask pertinent questions that might have influenced her decisions or preparations for the new teaching experience.

June made the decision based more on a need for change. June's husband was also making a change in his teaching career. He was moving from elementary teaching to high school teaching. Her choice of schools was based on the apparent strength of the school's principal. The principal and June's husband had previously worked together. Some of her thinking was also based on memories of favorite teachers in high school. She did not spend any time in the school or do any preparation for the career transition.

Wayne wanted to be a high school teacher when he started university. He settled on elementary teaching because of the opportunities for males at that level. His choice of school was based on a single visit. Wayne found that the administrators, other teachers, and the students all seemed to be very friendly. He did not research adolescent behavior or junior high education.

Feeling and thoughts related to "trust" affected the manner that the teacher narrators adapted to their new school environments. Susanne, Gail, June, and Robert withdrew from full participation in the activities of the school more and more as the year progressed. They all spoke of feelings of isolation and withdrew to the own classrooms where they had stronger feelings of control. As first year teachers in junior high school and as former elementary school teachers their performance was being scrutinized by other teachers, parents, and administrators. The teacher narrators found it increasingly difficult to establish relationships with others based on "trust" so

that they could seek or receive help with their perceived real personal and professional problems. Blase and Blase (1994) stated that:

> To be fully effective professionals, we must feel that we work in an environment of trust. . . . trust is the amount of 'safeness' we feel with others. If we feel safe with others, we are able to sit with them and comfortably discuss difficult and delicate issues about our work and our performance. We are able to reveal ourselves as we strive to manage both personal and professional challenges. (p. 20)

Conley (1996) noted that:

> If teachers are to have greater decision-making authority, they will have to interact successfully with one another more than they do currently, and will have to do so in a frank manner. . . . Teachers rarely develop these skills in schools where they operate in isolation. (p. 87)

Sergiovanni (1994) discussed the difference between professional practitioner thinking and technician thinking. He noted that:

> Technical work is, in a sense, scripted work. In the professions by contrast, practitioners are superordinate to the knowledge base. They draw upon it and are informed by it, as they make decisions about what to do and how to do it. But how this knowledge is embodied in practice depends on the circumstances they face. Thus professional knowledge may exist in part before the fact. But for the most part it is created in use as professionals made decisions about their practice. (p. 141)

June, Wayne, Susanne and Gail found themselves in unfamiliar situations where they were expected to function as experienced professionals. They did not have the experience, background or the knowledge base to assist them in making the decisions that professional teachers have to make. They were in the process of gaining this professional knowledge through positive and negative experiences. To have a sense of control over their situations they withdrew more into their own classrooms rather than reaching out to others. This was not as big a problem for Robert. His methods and ways of relating to his students did not change because he was now teaching in a junior high school. He operated in isolation with his students, doing what he felt was in the best interests of his special needs class. Blase and Anderson (1995) noted that teachers often adopt defensive strategies to deal with difficulties with students and parents. They noted that

> the concept of interpersonal politics underscores teachers' vulnerabilities and sensitivities associated with day-to-day interactions with students and parents in the schools. These sensitivities, . . .

> contribute to the development of a calculative orientation in teachers, consisting of self-monitoring and timely adjustments of behavior to deal effectively with others. In general, interpersonal politics in schools focuses on the strategic exercise of power for purposes of both influence and protection. (p. 48)

Hargreaves (1994) noted that "researchers talk about pride, commitment and uncertainty, teachers talk about emotions like anxiety, frustration and guilt" (p. 141). The teacher narrators in this study all expressed feelings associated with "guilt." Hargreaves described "depressive guilt" as times when

> we realize we may be harming or neglecting those for whom we care, by not meeting their needs or by not giving them sufficient attention. (p. 142)

There is evidence in the teacher narrators' stories that they were experiencing feelings of guilt. Susanne and Wayne felt that they could no longer provide the nurturing environment that they felt was dominant in elementary schools. They felt that they could not be the "baby sitter" that the job required. Wayne and June both withdrew some of their time and services from their jobs so that they could focus on their family and personal activities. June had completely stopped taking work home. June was very frustrated at not being able to give students individual time at schools. She was troubled about not being able to motivate her girls in gym classes to participate more fully in activities that she enjoyed so much. Susanne and Gail had similar feelings of frustration. They had problems inspiring their students to enjoy their subjects as much as they felt they should. Gail was concerned about how other teachers would view her attempts to create a nicer environment by putting up decorative bulletin boards. Robert spent a considerable amount of time giving reasons why he ignored the mandated curriculum. He justified his actions by referring to his personal knowledge of each individual student.

Susanne, Wayne, Gail and June all recognized that they could have used some help while making their career transition. They experienced anxiety about being perceived as incompetent in their new positions and at the same time felt guilt for not seeking the necessary help. Part of the problem was that the teacher narrators had experienced success in elementary schools. In their junior high teaching positions, they were forced to deal with situations where they did not have the personal-professional knowledge to enable them to make better decisions.

Implications for Future Research

The present study of the experiences of five teachers as they made a career transition from being elementary teachers to becoming junior high teachers is a relatively new area of investigation. This interpretivist study, using personal experience methods (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994), has highlighted some areas of interest where further research could be carried out.

More studies need to be completed on teachers' experiences because:

1. we need to see beneath our assumptions that experienced teachers who have been successful in one situation, will be successful in other situations,

2. such stories may help to break down the isolation still experienced by teachers and help teachers to see ways to develop schools as professional communities,

3. such teachers' stories help us see the different school cultures associated with different grade level groupings and possible ways to overcome stereotypes associated with them, and

4. we need to develop a greater understanding of the connections between teacher thinking, knowledge acquired through education, and professional knowledge acquired through practical experiences.

Implications for Practice

This study focused on the career transition of five teachers as they moved from elementary to junior high schools. There has not been an extensive amount of research completed with individual teachers as they transfer from one school location to another or from one grade level grouping to another in the school system. Schlossberg (1987) noted that ". . .people differ in how they cope with what seems to be the same transition and often cope well in one transition but feel ineffective in the next" (p. 75). The five teacher narrators who participated in this study had successfully made transitions in their past experiences and yet, for the most part, appeared to be experiencing stress in their current career transitions to becoming junior high teachers. The following recommendations are to school jurisdictions, principals, teachers seeking transfers, and to colleagues of teachers new to their school.

If career mobility is desired by teachers and by school districts so that teachers can have a number of teaching experiences, career transitions need to be supported by district administrators and school administrators. Most school jurisdictions offer support to first year teachers as they make the transition from university to schools. School jurisdictions should consider making similar support services available to teachers as they make career transitions. School level administrators might want to consider appointing senior staff members as advisors/mentors to all new staff entering their school.

Before making the move to another grade level grouping, teachers should have the opportunity to spend time at the new level. Teachers contemplating the transition should be given some guidance about the types of questions to ask and whom to ask. Researching a new position and the obligations related to that position would be beneficial. It is recommended that teachers talk to administrators, other teachers, students and their support systems before making a career transition.

When the teachers were having difficulties during their transition experience, they noted that they felt very much alone. Because I had experienced many of the same problems during a transition that I had made to a junior high position from an elementary school, they discovered that what they were feeling was not unique to them. It might be advisable for school administrators and jurisdiction administrators to facilitate group meetings for the individuals who were experiencing career transitions. It might be beneficial for individuals, who feel it necessary, to be able to talk and confer with others who are either experiencing a similar difficulty or have already dealt with a similar problem.

It would appear that the school administrators of the junior high schools in this study were making the assumption that the teacher narrators were experienced and would therefore not encounter problems similar to those of neophyte teachers. If junior high school administrators plan to make changes in their schools' philosophy and wish to do this by bringing in new staff members with elementary experience because they are perceived as having some desirable teaching methodologies, then it is incumbent on the administrators to offer support and provide the resources necessary to help the teachers make a successful transition. The support could be in the form of

teacher mentors, support discussion groups, or special inservice training sessions.

There has been a move away from the traditional junior high model for instruction based on subject specialization towards the middle school concept. Principals see the participation of teachers with elementary school education and experience as being desirable. When school administrators bring new teachers into existing school cultures they should be familiar with the different organizational features of elementary schools so that possible differences can be fully explained to these individuals. The features of class organization, time for instruction, meeting time and the use of technology in the classroom were important school cultural features for the teacher narrators in this study.

School administrators should also have a clear vision of their existing school culture and be aware of the impact that changes being contemplated might have on that school culture. While it is generally recognized that change is a process not an event, the appointment of elementary teachers and the use of core groupings will be an event rather than a process if students and parental expectations are not addressed. For the teachers in this study, organizational changes, including teacher team planning time, were insufficient in helping them cope with their expectations for students. Certainly, these teachers, and others new to junior high schools, would benefit from more information about adolescents and their learning styles.

In a time when career mobility of teachers among schools and grade levels within schools or school jurisdictions is limited, the jurisdiction should be aware of the possible impact this might have on the quality of education that is being offered. The structure of school systems is relatively flat, so if teachers wish to experience new growth situations where they feel challenged and where their skills are more fully utilized, school jurisdictions may need to explore ways of accommodating the movement of experienced teachers. If teachers were given more opportunity to move and face new challenges, making transitions to new school cultures might be made with greater ease and present fewer challenges to the teacher's sense of self.

Concluding Remarks

During the time that this study was completed there were many environmental factors which may have influenced the attitudes and feelings

of the teachers involved in this research. The education community was experiencing stress from government cutbacks in funding, salary reductions, staff eliminations, reductions in support services to classroom teachers and growing class sizes along with demands from the community for increased academic achievement by students. These pressures brought about changes in the way many schools were structured. During this time there was little upward or even lateral movement of staff in the two school jurisdictions used in this study. These rapid changes brought stress to the education community.

The current study was inspired by my personal interest in the lives of teachers and the events that influence their professional decisions. This particular research came about as the result of a career transition that I made from an elementary school to a junior high school. I made the decision to leave the junior high school after one year at that level.

I was left with the feeling that I had survived the experience. I had used methods in my teaching that I did not like to ensure my survival. My ways of knowing and doing as a teacher were put in question for the first time in my twenty years in a classroom. I had strong feelings that I was the only person to have experienced these new challenges that confound and confront teachers on a daily basis.

When discussing possible research ideas with my advisor, she suggested that I should consider this research topic. It has provided me with the opportunity to gain insight about the experiences of other teachers. This current research has explored many questions that I had about junior high school teaching, school organization, administrative support, and community support.

Talking to the five teacher narrators who participated in this study has allowed me to know that I was not the only person to experience dilemmas as a result of a career transition. Two of the teacher narrators in this study said that they found it helpful to discuss their current experiences with someone who had attempted the same career transition.

It is hoped that the reading of the teachers' stories presented in Chapter 3 and the analysis and interpretation presented in Chapters 4 and 5 will provide readers with some insight into career transitions of teachers and the lives of these five teachers in particular. Many of us may recognize elements of our own stories in theirs. The challenge is to ensure that, in future, other

elementary teachers who transfer to junior high schools will have less stressful stories to tell of their career transitions.

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